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Keats in His Letters, by J. Middleton Murry, on page 134

The Saturday Review of Literature

EDITED BY HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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A PORTRAIT BY CÉZANNE

one of the artists of the Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre's Paris.

Memories of a Lost Time

YEARS OF PLENTY. By E. DEGRAMONT, Ex-Duchesse de Clermont-Tonnerre. Translated by FLORENCE and VICTOR LLONA. New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith. 1931. $3.

Reviewed by HENRY WALCOTT BOYNTON

THIS is a sequel to "Pomp and Circumstance," a book of reminiscence which pleased many readers of English a couple of years ago. Nowhere does the fine French touch more easily excel than in this field of personal "memoirs." Its easy cynicism is beyond the reach of "Anglo-Saxon" gossips, who—even to a Margot or a Cornwallis-West—never get quite clear of conscious effrontery. Mme. de Gramont (ex-duchesse as divorced wife of a duc) is mistress of the classic mood, heir to Saint Simon and Sevigné. She has an air of good-humoredly permitting the world to be the confidant of a great lady who cares nothing for the world's opinion. Her disclosure is not the exhibitionism of vulgar vulgarians, for it reveals little of her personal drama, though it is so free to express emancipated ideas and to comment on human frailty.

The book, like its predecessor, has no continuity or conclusiveness, but is a series of notes and impressions of all kinds of things, and people, arranged under convenient heads: "Parisian Drawing-Rooms," "Montmartre and a Few Painters," "Racecourses," "Art Collectors," and so on. The first-named title covers a group of rapid sketches of various famous persons of the great world with whom, in the salons of nineteenth century Paris, the author's birth and breeding brought contact. And alongside the ladies and gentlemen of the Faubourg, whose *gentlesse* is their chief credential, are ranged the statesmen and publicists who were admitted to those Parisian drawing-rooms of a generation ago. And Elizabeth de

(*Continued on next page*)

Pattern of the Ancient World

By HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

MUCH has been heard, since the New Humanists stirred the new artists to a defence of their work, of the value of literature as pure intuition, so much that there is some danger that those who call themselves connoisseurs of literature will become as dandified as the critics of the 'nineties and in a novel or a poem refuse any credit except to Art. T. S. Eliot has already reacted against this nicety of criticism; and to his practice should be added the warning that no age will be satisfied with "pure poetry" alone even if it is great poetry, but must have also those many re-creations of and reflections upon experience in which art is just a means of impressive transmission. Wells and Lewis may be regarded as sociologists, Dreiser as a journalist, Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence as physiologists and psychologists, yet if they are neither first-rate scientists nor first-rate artists, it is a vulgar error to suppose that their books are therefore without value. Whether lasting or not, these widely read books represent an absorptive process by which new thought and newly aroused emotions have passed through the contemporary metabolism and helped to make us. There are arts as well as Art, and an estimation of what they accomplish belongs as much to the function of criticism as the discussion of poetical technique, or the creative intuition of pure expressiveness.

The great talents which feed and grow fat on the most energetic thinking of the day do not suffer for lack of attention. The scientific novelist in the nineteen-thirties is in much the same situation as the theological poet of the seventeenth century, the moral poet of the eighteenth, and the ethical or philosophical novelist of the nineteenth. Attention waits for him. But those lesser, or less advertised, talents which act as carriers for ideas or information, equally characteristic of the age, but less familiar, are more likely to be neglected. The critics pass them by because it often requires a specialist in the field they cultivate to tell whether stories or poems that claim to be more than pure imagination are actually authentic. Readers pass them by because their hurrying interests carry them in pursuit of more popular knowledge. Hence books that in 1830 would have been eagerly discussed for their subject matter as well as for their art, in 1930 may live unnoticed even by readers who need only to be told of their quality in order to enjoy them.

So it seems to have been with Naomi Mitchison,* a writer praised by scholars, read by a devoted group who have followed her career with growing enthusiasm, but largely unknown to the general reader. Naomi Mitchison, who is one of the Scotch Haldanes, a niece, I think, of Lord Haldane's, is the artist-in-waiting upon modern archaeology. As H. G. Wells has pastured upon sociology, so she draws her materials and takes her points of view from that realistic, scientific study of the classic past, which depends upon ethnology, folk lore, anthropology, economic documents, and the remains of the arts, in addition to that literature and history from which our previous conceptions of the ancient world were chiefly formed. We are scarcely yet aware how profoundly this new archaeology has changed our ideas of the past, yet even to a college undergraduate Bulwer Lytton's "Last Days of Pompeii" is now faintly absurd, and by no means only because of its florid romanticism. "Ben Hur" has been given to the movies, and the elaborate classic reconstructions of nineteenth century English poetry are dead unless their own current vitality has kept them alive. Kingsley's Alexandria is a vague city, invented as a setting for Christian Victorian ethics, the Greece and Rome of the eighteenth century classicists are bookish, and even Gibbon's Constantinople will soon be rewritten in terms that will make the great historian seem, not false, but ill-informed.

Naomi Mitchison is not a historian. She is not, so far as I know, an archaeologist, although, so far as accuracy is possible in the reconstruction of facts and imaginations two thousand years dead, both historians and archaeologists vouch for the accuracy of her backgrounds, and the moods and mental attitudes of her characters. She is not, I should say, even a novelist, as the interrupted flow and the formlessness of her last and longest book would show. She is a story teller, a chronicler, dealing not with plots so much as with character reacting against environment, and not with character in its usual sense so much as with those spiritual or mental attitudes which make the differentiation of character in different ages. Any civilized man could by a stretch of probability feel and think like any other civilized man in his own contemporary culture, but that is not possible with the past. There are no Cleopatras of our day, no Einsteins of Greece, or Woodrow Wilsons or Lenins of Rome. While with antiquity the bonds of tradition and continuing human nature more unite than separate us, the separation is there and is absolute.

Naomi Mitchison is a chronicler of youth, who has

*THE CORN KING AND THE SPRING QUEEN. By NAOMI MITCHINSON. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931. $2.50.

This Week

"The Corn King and the Spring Queen."
Reviewed by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY.

"The Border."
Reviewed by EVELYN SCOTT.

"John Henry."
Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS.

"Albert Grope."
Reviewed by ROBERT HERRICK.

The Angler Fish.
By CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

"The Golden Thread."
Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES.

"Francis Dana."
Reviewed by MILDRED E. LOMBARD.

"Voltaire."
Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT.

Next Week, or Later

Announcement on Pegasus Perplexing Contest

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tried to recapture, without blurring or distortion, the eternal qualities of youth in regions of time whose every value of life has its obvious resemblances to and yet its subtle differences from our own. Her Gallic brother and sister in "The Conquered," her lovely Stoic, Philylla, in "The Corn King and the Spring Queen," the young Kleomones of Sparta, the island boy of "Cloud Cuckoo Land," are figures that like the youths and maidens on the ruined columns of the temple of Diana of the Ephesians appeal without the aid of history.

Because she writes of youth, and often of children, she has been erroneously classed as a children's writer; because she writes with an informed realism no more squeamish than the cultures in which her characters move, her books have frightened the searchers for reticent fiction for boys and girls; because she writes of Sparta, Athens, Scythia, and Alexandria, it has been assumed (apparently) that her stories are for the erudite. Because her Gaul and Greece are not the Gaul and Greece of the text books she has puzzled the readers who have strayed her way unprepared.

* * *

Yet, for a reader with an imagination easily stirred by history, I know no current books more interesting, and even exciting, than Naomi Mitchison's. The historical taste is essential. If your interest is aroused only by the realism of New York, Berlin, and London, she is not for you. And she is not always at her best. There is a certain scientific (or is it Scotch?) ruthlessness in Naomi Mitchison. The reader must have all the details, all the background. He must go through the fertility feast in Scythia to its last sensual detail, he must get to its last ounce that living distinction between Athenian and Spartan, between Greek and barbarian, which so interested the ancient world. In spite of her fine imagination, she writes often as a social historian (though never dully), and that is why I speak of her work not as pure fiction but as a reflection of a powerful intellectual interest sprung of a new and more scientific knowledge of the past. But if history interests the reader, he will not find her lacking in imagination. The Spartan world of Philylla needs much explaining, but it is always her world, and for her primarily that we read of it. Sparta (and she is at her best in such books as "Black Sparta") is not Plato's or Plutarch's nor merely a set of folkways, rational, coherent, vivid, as the modern scientist sees them, but both and more, a homely and probable background in which the Spartan traditional character, and these new living embodiments, Philylla, Agiatis, Kleomones, seem probable and true. The great concepts of duty, courage, self-control, and self-expression, which are familiar to us because we have inherited them, are there, and also the realisms of a life strange to us—cruelties, sexualisms, strange and successful acts of beauty, reasoning not our reasoning, faiths not possibly our faiths.

Next to her Spartans, her barbarians are best, and there, of course, her imagination has freer play, for there are few data for the Gallic, and less for the Scythian, life. In "The Corn King and the Spring Queen" she begins with the youth and the love story of a couple who are priest and priestess as well as king and queen of a barbarian city, and in a very real sense god and goddess at the fertility rites for the corn by which they live. And these she weaves in and out of the heroic story of the last attempt to make Sparta once again Spartan, Kleomones's story as Plutarch tells it, which ended crushed beneath the decadent mass civilization of Alexandria. Erif Der, the Spring Queen, and Tarrik, the Corn King, and Berris Der, the craftsman in metals, are instinct with power. They watch, irresistibly fascinated, the last attempt of Greece to rule by philosopher kings. Their story is rich in incident; it moves as easily through the Greek city world, or the Scythian marshes, or the new metropolitan civilization of the Ptolemies, as Lewis through his Main Street, and, as with Lewis, it is our sociology, our anthropology, our psychology, our modern willingness to see realistically and to use the facts, which give this story, not its art certainly, but its differentia from the old historical romance.

No modern realism applied to ancient custom is in itself enough to make fine historical fiction, but Naomi Mitchison has gifts to make her imaginative reconstructions live. The Ionian Greek and his boy of "Cloud Cuckoo Land," caught, like bright salmon, in the net of the Spartan pattern, is dramatic narrative of a high order and in its own right.

Of course, she, no more than any earlier writer, has really reconstructed the past. Her Spartans have been to English public schools, precisely as English public schools have never been unaware of Sparta. Her Scythians owe a little to Freud. Her Athenians have seen Bloomsbury. Just so, in the far cruder (historically speaking) though spirited stories of Kipling in "Puck of Pook's Hill," the Roman colonials are too clearly British boys from Sandhurst, holding a post on the Afghan border. And yet this achievement (it is not an experiment) of hers, in which the realistic methods developed for novels of current life have been applied with a like dependence upon scholarship, with a like frankness, with a like scrupulous regard for social and psychological accuracy, to the ancient world, deserves to be widely known and heartily praised. I know nothing like it today (Flaubert, of course, is a forerunner in the past) except Feuchtwanger's novels of the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century in Germany. Naomi Mitchison has avoided his brutal naturalism, while exceeding his frankness of detail, by choosing her subjects in lucent periods where heroism was not improbable, where high ideals were being born, or were still tight clasped though dying, and the pattern of life was undeniably beautiful even when freed from romance. He is a better novelist than she, but as a chronicler not so good.

It is true that historical narrative becomes a great art only when the sense of time past is less important than the consciousness of new life created—as in Shakespeare, Goethe, or Dante. But the opposite, as I have said before, has its own merit. When this time sense, which is part of our intellectual curiosity, is aroused by the implied contrasts of such historical fiction as Naomi Mitchison's, the reader's imagination grasps his own experience with fresh competence. Human nature is extended in time and space, and he welcomes the book that can give him such satisfactions. Of this art, this mind art, if you choose, there are few successful practitioners in any age; hence the importance of Naomi Mitchison.

Memories of a Lost Time

(*Continued from preceding page*)

Gramont, born to the Faubourg, was never to be confined to its limits. Like English Margot, she was before her time in challenging the tight-laced traditions of gentility. She was as much at home in the Montmartre studio of Degas, or with Rodin at Meudon, as in the salons and boudoirs of her own quarter. And she developed theories and a taste in art, which produces some valuable estimates of the masters of her time, both in painting and in literature. Her chapter on "Writers" is a series of notes and recollections of many of the greatest Frenchmen of letters, Mallarmé, Bourget, Maurras, Loti, Barrès, Louys, Valéry, De Gourmont; and "Colette," whose "Chéri" is saluted as "the greatest love story of our time."

In its fashion, therefore, this book sums up the Paris, the France, of the "*temps des équipages*" (to use the original title of "Pomp and Circumstance")—the leisurely, amused, safe France that had its warnings in 1911 and earlier, but was far from ready for what happened in 1914. Mme. de Gramont believes that not only the Junkers but the German people wanted a war in 1911, and were furious at the Congo arrangement. Her final chapter, "Bananas Tango" comments wittily and resignedly on the new Paris that has abandoned taste for modernity and gentility for jazz. The change cannot all be laid to the war, she says:

> Three years before it came, Paris was dancing as it dances to-day, and like a powerful magnet was already attracting New York jazz and the Argentine tango; in restaurants, Bananas Tango raged along with the immortal Peaches Melba; foreigners abounded in the bars where cocktails were served and seemed to be waiting for the blessed hour of the low franc. . . . Jazz cast its powerful spell over Europe. It startled us at first like a new fashion, then bewitched us and now is our daily bread. "Give us, O Lord, our daily disk." . . . And the new sound created a new auditory nerve. The raucous, yet crooning, saxophone made its appearance; it contrasts with the romantic violin but like it wails, only wails for other reasons.

The English version of these memoirs is simple and vigorous for the most part, but does not always shake itself clear of French idiom, e.g.: "Nearly all of Lazlo's prominent English sitters have an identical regard illuminated from within"; and "It will soon be four months since we have been cruising around the Mediterranean."

The Bloody Ground

THE BORDER, A MISSOURI SAGA. By DAGMAR DONEGHY. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1931.

Reviewed by EVELYN SCOTT
Author of "The Wave"

IN eighteen-sixty, Dan Leinster was in possession of a fine piece of Missouri farm land and the owner of valuable slaves. Leinster, with his wife, had emigrated to Missouri from a Kentucky which was, in the spacious conception of pioneers, already overpopulated.

Missouri was still "the West." But there was another West. Leinster's property was on "the border," near Independence; and from there the Santa Fé trail made the route for outlaw adventurers who despised the security so carefully contrived by conserving natures who demanded hard work of themselves and their dependents. Freedom in irresponsibility was the dream of the Kansas outlaw. Kansas harbored the run-away slave as well as the gambler. Little Andy Leinster, through whose eyes of childhood we see most of the drama of the period, has his nightmare conception of the Jayhawker: a bird of prey who pecks out people's eyes. Big buck William, though loyal to Andy's father, has listened to the voice of the agitator. He tries to kill Andy's uncle. For this act of rebellion, William is "sold South."

Somewhat later, a more vital necessity compels Dan Leinster to dispose of all but two of his human chattels. Abolition propaganda is having its effect and the agrarian interests depending on slave labor are facing possible ruination. Without slaves, the Leinster style of farming does not pay. The Abolitionists, attacking, have the appearance of waging, if not a "war to end war," a war to end the exploitation of man by man. Yet Dan Leinster's espousal of the Confederate cause has behind it a biological urge comparable to that which gives fervor to the Union program to destroy Southern dominance in politics.

In Leinster's absence, Jayhawkers and Red Legs from Kansas descend on his farm and plunder it. Federal soldiers, acting under orders, burn his home. A kindly sergeant is moved by the juvenile defiance of Andy who snatches the family Bible and a volume of Shakespeare from the flames. Mrs. Leinster is not allowed to save anything else. A generous Unionist, to his own risk, harbors her and her children until she is able to resume an independent existence on an impoverished scale in a tumble-down shanty. Dan Leinster is killed and Mrs. Leinster struggles on and wins to a modest peace as her sons survive and she sees the farm recovered and rebuilt.

She has remained staunchly of the opinions of her husband; but little Andy, without the need of the theoretic self-justification, sees war in the terms of the individuals engaged in it. "Slavery" and "Abolition" are words to cover multitudes of motives. On the basis of Andy's experience, Major Plumb's last remark, "Most men are good. It's war that's bad," are not too obviously sentimental. How can one judge these victims of fate and prejudice!

"The Border" is told in an anecdotal fashion and with a pure objectivity which conveys nothing of the individual psychology and, except in vague implications, never defines character. Mrs. Leinster is the kind of woman Sheila Kaye-Smith likes to write about. Judged by her apparent resourcefulness, she is an heroic figure, but she is an abstract of heroism rather than its unique, inevitable example. Little Andy, consistently a child, might be any child. The great virtue of the book is a reportorial style which it would be conceivable to trace as a descent from Defoe. As much conviction as is in the writer will out, it appears, despite clichés. In spite of an undistinguished vocabulary, Miss Doneghy's expression emerges with a clean coherence: and the last part of "The Border," in particular, takes us far from the literary, Uncle Remus atmosphere of certain early chapters, through events which scarcely require interpretation to make them moving. There is little or nothing of specific insight; but there are broad conclusions from a generous intelligence and there is real vigor. This book does something to carry us a little further from the cultural self-consciousness which made us aware of our lacks to an immediate sense of an aspect of Civil War history which has never before had stirring fictional treatment.

Byron's home at Newstead Abbey, and relics, were presented to Nottingham, England, on the anniversary of the return of the poet's body from Missolonghi.

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Sampson

JOHN HENRY. By ROARK BRADFORD. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by JONATHAN DANIELS

FROM the black Adam and the black God of his earlier books, Roark Bradford in his new novel, "John Henry," has turned to myth-making on his own account. His John Henry, a figure comparable to the white Paul Bunyan, is a rover of great labors and great braggings, a worker and a lover. Wearing American overalls he is, nevertheless, not so far from Mr. Bradford's two other books that he could not have been named Sampson and set moving in the dark Bradford Old Testament.

John Henry is my name and I'm six foot tall. I travels around like a ramblin' fool and hit ain't nobody can shade me. I was bawn in de Black River country whar de sun don't never shine, and I kin handle my woman.... I'm big and bad and tree-top tall and my feet don't tetch de surface.

John Henry moved up and down the Mississippi from New Orleans to Memphis rolling cotton on the *Big Jim White* as no other roustabout ever rolled cotton, out-driving all spike drivers on the Yellow Dog Railroad, and shoveling coal on the Red Ball freight so tremendously that One-eyed Bill Shelly could pull "de highball out'n dat whistle." Women and particularly his Julie Anne gave him a weary burden. He asked Jesus to help him with his burden and Jesus did; but he tried to beat a steam winch rolling cotton, and he and Julie Anne are now "wawkink side by side in Glory."

From the Bible and the Negro hymn Mr. Bradford appears to have turned to the roustabout's song, using Rabelais rather than the Holy Scriptures as a formal literary background. John Henry is very much a black Gargantua and in parts of the book, as the birth of John Henry, there seem to be definite echoes from the fine bawdy Frenchman. It would be a better book if Mr. Bradford had dared follow Rabelais further. While his prostitutes, creepers, and gamblers are amusing figures, they remain only figures, and figures almost too polite. They will be out of place in no polite library. Had Mr. Bradford admitted a little more of their bawdiness he might have admitted more reality. Into their mouths he has put some excellent comic verse, perhaps folk, perhaps Bradford. For instance:

I'm old and rough
And skinny and tough
And I ain't never yit
Got drunk enough,
So baby don't grieve after me.

Mr. Bradford repeats himself in each book he writes with a quite disarming ability. Certainly no man today writes better humor about the Negro than he does though he writes always seeing black ludicrousness with white eyes. Funny as parts of this book are, the reader who has read the earlier books cannot escape from a feeling that the comedy as it stays identical grows thinner. Obviously it is not for lack of ability that Mr. Bradford keeps repeating the same song. With his great abilities there are many fresh roads before him. He could write fine comedy of his own race. Or to change more completely, he should be able to write about Negroes, not these ludicrous stage Negroes, but true ones who walk and breathe and whose comedy is sharp in escape from their dark skins and their darker lives.

Love in the Caribbees

THUNDER BELOW. By THOMAS ROURKE. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1931. $2.50.

By ARTHUR RUHL

MR. ROURKE'S story of love amongst the oil men in Venezuela is hard as nails, as very evidently he intends it to be. Not for anything would he stoop to any prettiness of stuff or style. To be sure, in the rather claptrap situation in which he places Susan, "young, lovely, married to a blind man—clinging to loyalty in a community starved for women," he does stoop a bit, but the actual Susan is a good deal less Hollywood than the blurb would have you think.

Susan is the boss engineer's wife, the only American woman in San Mateo. None of the younger engineers has a wife, although all make free with native women; Susan has no children. She is as hard-boiled as any of them, drinks like a fish, and frequently gets tight with the rest. She and Ken, who tells the story, are in love with each other. It can't be said that Susan's loyalty weighs on her very heavily; if anybody's loyal, it's Ken, and Ken's loyalty consists of a certain subconscious decency which always holds him back, in spite of Susan's provocations, from going the whole distance. It doesn't prevent him from kissing Susan whenever the coast is clear, or "running my hand down her back, feeling the muscles, hard under the soft flesh." Ken's love is exceedingly muscular.

Ken tells his story in short, declarative sentences, to which an air of informality and genuineness is given by the trick of repeating key words or phrases over and over as if the simple engineer were jotting down his narrative just as it came, without bothering to polish it. For example:

We were sitting at a table in front of El Vesubio in Paso Sucre watching the crowd move around the plaza. It had been a good fiesta, really. We sat drinking beer and watching the procession. We drank a lot of beer because the beer was cold. A sailboat had brought in a load of ice from Carupano for the Carnival, so we drank a lot of cold beer while we had the chance.

Like that. It is skillfully done, especially when the author contrives to splash in all sorts of authentic

F. O. MANN

atmosphere, and even the beauty and seductive charm of his tropical scene, without departing from his short, seemingly slapdash, declarative sentences.

No less admirable is the thoroughgoing way in which, having taken a certain line, he avoids all emotional softness. An example is the episode in which the four-flusher, Walt, whom all the men cordially dislike, goes back to the States, leaving behind the little *mestizo* girl, Lolita, with whom he has been living. Lolita was not just an ordinary sleeping dictionary. She was really a sort of Caribbean Madame Butterfly. Her brother tried to kill Webb, when Lolita went to live with him, a proof to Webb of his own importance and manliness which made him the more insufferable. Lolita stayed on board when the steamer sailed and it stopped out in the bay to put her off in a small boat. The Americans watching from the shore saw the shore boat stop, move about in circles, hidden every now and then by the heavy seas, and presently it was learned that Lolita had jumped overboard and made an end of herself.

Two jets of white vapor rose from the steamer and the toots came over the water. A bit of white froth appeared under the stern and the vessel moved away, out to sea.

"My God!" Horner said, "Webb'll be worse than ever now!"...

There are times when the author's determination to put the thing just as it was, to interpose not the slightest film of fine writing or fancy notions between his hard-boiled crew and the reader, carries him to the edge of burlesque. Susan is almost too "tough"—at any rate, she seems rather more an appetite with a name and less an individual than his sharply defined and understandable men.

But it is preferable, doubtless, to lean that way rather than the other. "Thunder Below" is a good job, and the Caribbean background, and the life of the Americans, such as it is, is the real thing.

Writing, in her "Arnold Bennett Himself," of that novelist, Rebecca West says: "Swaggering in his ubiquity and omniscience he asked society, 'Did you say I was to stay behind the counter and attend to the counter? Was that what you said to me, back in the Five Towns?' And society's answer was to press round him, offering him its friendship. No man in any walk of life ever had so many, or so distinguished, devotees. He was the chosen companion of the most famous and powerful men and the most beautiful women of the day."

A Sound Tradition

ALBERT GROPE. By F. O. MANN. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT HERRICK

THIS is a pleasant novel, which will be enjoyed by many readers, who like their fiction not too serious nor introspective. It is peopled with easily recognizable types, firmly drawn, who are "characters" in the more special sense of the word; that is, their motivation is simplified and consistently exaggerated. They are drawn from the lower circles of English suburban life where comedy is so much more endurable, in fiction, than reality. In other words, Mr. Mann in his first novel has followed the sound tradition of English fiction best exemplified by Dickens. The theme, the adventures of the hero-narrator, son of a charwoman, in his struggle upwards after affluence and social recognition, is also a Dickens theme, although treated in a gentler spirit as becomes an age none too sure of its social beliefs. Phoenix, the dissipated artist, Blowberry the would-be-artist, the two religious leaders of the Chapel of Truth, Bummel and Squillings, Lady Gollaby, Mr. Tulse, *et omnes* are amusing enough caricatures of persons to be encountered in these United States as easily as in South London.

For the more exacting reader they raise once more the question of caricature or exaggeration in the field of fiction. Why is it that such well-marked characters, even the best of Dickens, lack a certain credible humanity? Although similar eccentrics are met often enough in daily experience, persons whose actions and words if recorded verbatim would give the same effect of caricature, yet there is something unexpressed in every human contact, but unconsciously recognized by the sensitive observer, which modifies and humanizes mere eccentricity. This divination of a larger humanity the greatest novelists, such as Dostoievsky, have always communicated to their creations. Their characters are not merely credible but self-convincing, which the Micawbers, the Bummels, *et al.* seldom are. Caricature like sarcasm is an easy way of making a point. Moreover, the point, as in the case of Mr. Mann's types, is often so readily grasped that the iteration of mannerisms becomes tiresome. Whenever Lady Golloby opens her mouth or Mr. Bummel or McSpurt orates the reader knows so well what to expect that his eye impatiently drops to the next break in the page. He may thus miss many an amusing expression of the particular humor, for Mr. Mann is never merely verbose and always apt in the management of dialogue.

Singularly enough the one character in "Albert Grope" (aside from the bewildered hero) not simplified and caricatured is the sympathetic Frenchwoman, in whose maternal arms Albert ends his quest for respectability and a superior human companionship. It is this Mrs. Taube who pronounces the pith of the book thus wisely and wittily, after listening to young Albert's gropings for happiness:

"You English!" she said. "You are a wonderful people! But you are such snobs! That Adam—was he not a poor gardening fellow? And that Eve! She did not have one change of her small frock and kept not one little maid? And your aristocracy. Is it not full of the good blood of bad women? If they do have looks or brains—is it not their grandmothers were cocottes? Ach, give me the man that begins a good family! Any fool can end one. It is better to come out of the mud than go into it. That is the praise!"

Good doctrine for the "high class residential suburb" anywhere!

Apropos of the late Frank Harris's editorship of the now defunct *Saturday Review*, the *Manchester Guardian* says: "The team he collected to work under him was remarkable indeed. He picked out Bernard Shaw to attend to the drama and also the ethical philosophy and social foibles of the day. He had Max Beerbohm ranging freely over the vanities of the world, and Cunninghame Graham recollecting in tranquillity the emotions of his travel. D. S. MacColl was his art critic, and Arthur Symons kept an eye on the prose and poetry of the younger generation. There can be no doubt that Frank Harris had at least one of the great editor's gifts: he could pick his men.

"After leaving the *Saturday Review* Harris founded and edited *The Candid Friend*, a journal more full of slings and arrows than of abiding truth."

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The Bowling Green

The Angler Fish

BY the time this appears in print I suppose we will all have forgotten what today was like. It is one of those sultry September interims and I have rarely known a day when it seemed so difficult to attack the job on hand. (Also, hay fever seems worse than usual this autumn). The only thought in my mind has been, what about a swim. In fact I feel as indolent as I did a few weeks ago in Bermuda. I've been wondering if those islands had any of their September hurricanes yet? We knew the islands only in fifteen days of practically unbroken sunshine; but one afternoon, when a tropical storm had been reported in the neighborhood, I observed that Bermuda takes its hurricane warnings very seriously. Will Beebe, having once before had his laboratory unroofed, was getting ready to pack up his specimens and records. At the hotel all hands were active taking down screens and fastening windows. The equinoctial gales are more than just a legend in those parts.

Today, when even Long Island lies in a Gulf Stream drowse, I try to reanimate myself by thinking of the angler fish that Mr. Mowbray showed me at the Bermuda Aquarium. I believe he is one of the very few that have ever been shown in public. He is a small odd-looking orange creature, perhaps between three and four inches long, and he has large finny flippers with joints in them, really more like legs than fins. One of these on each side, and one abaft, operate as a tripod. He approaches a piece of yellow sponge, which harmonizes exactly with his color, and takes up a firm stance on the bottom of the tank, resting comfortably on his three supports. His eyes are set a bit obliquely so that he looks upward most easily; this elevated gaze of his has a rather sly and mischievous air. And well it may, for he is considering subtle doings.

Believe it or not, as Mr. Ripley would say, he is angling for other fish. On top of his head, from a convenient little groove, he erects a tentacle that projects forward and upward so that it hangs slanting out beyond and above his nose. At the end of this antenna there is a little sensitive nerve, that projects almost an inch laterally on each side of the rod. This he can wriggle and vibrate with great rapidity: it looks exactly like a pale worm that has fallen into the water. Small fish, lured by the appetizing jiggles of this imitation bait, make a dart for it. And when they do so, the large and receptive mouth of the angler fish, waiting just below his facsimile worm, takes them gaily in. There is something preposterously amusing, and also sardonic and terrifying, in watching this small orange hypocrite patiently twirling his decoy to attract his minute companions. How many generations of sea-life, you ask yourself, did Nature require to outfit him with this intricate apparatus? How comparatively little, I was about to say, has she done for us. I hope the pictures Mr. Mowbray has been taking of his angler fish will come out well; a photo of him at work would be a delightful emblem for an ambitious young publisher. In a time of economic depression I must remind myself of this serene and humorous creature. Undisturbed by slow business he kept sedulously fluttering his worm.

* * *

Several Bermuda enthusiasts have been kind enough to write comparing notes. From an address enigmatically labelled "Sanctum Soconium" C. W. L. reports:—

So you went down on the *Veendam,* too! And did you have the supreme pleasure of having for your waiter the droll Alfred del Rey, whose home is the Chalet des Allés in Switzerland, to whom even the Chief Assistant Hofmeister bows in awesome admiration when it comes to serving Crepes Suzettes or a monumental Baked Alaska?

The three of us, Ed, my female cousin Gus, and myself formed "The Trio" to our fellow passengers. They were wondering, we learned later, whether Ed or I was Gus's husband and what the other was doing along on the honeymoon. For honeymoon they knew it was, else why would young people be taking a trip to Bermuda in May? or so they figgered.

And, oh, the things we did and saw, the peace and fun and quiet joy that was ours! None of us had travelled far from Manhattan before, and from the time we boarded the *Veendam* at the pier in the North River until it was time for us to embark at that same pier, our faces were encased in a permanent grin. We would just look around us, then at each other, and grin. Which special moment of joy shall I tell you about?

There was that opera bouffe expression Aurora, our waitress at the Belmont, would put on each time I would recall Sylvanus Heythorp as George Arliss lived him and said, "Tell cook the remmekin was good." Poor Aurora would look bewildered and sad, and only during the last few days she realized that "the serious young man was fooling."

Or that moment on deck when we walked to the stern and aped Edna, the breastworks girl who had been Kodaked in the company of every single man and life-saver on deck. Gus placed a life-saver about her neck and ogled at me, standing a few paces off with an imaginary camera in my hands, counting "One, Two"—when one of Edna's followers strode by, stopped, and turned, agape at our tableau. And when I reassured him by saying, "No fear, there's no film in this camera anyway," he bolted. We later heard him tell the deck steward he wondered weren't those eccentric three people much of a bother to him?

Or that moment when, bicycling to Hamilton on a steep down-grade, my brakes would not work and a two-foot stone wall was all that separated me from Hamilton Harbor. I jumped off and let the bike hit the wall. The native boy standing close by flashed his teeth and said, "You would have been the second to crash into that wall today, if you had hit it."

Or that moment when the dignified German doctor, fides Achates ex officio to a million dollar alcoholic, sat down with customary dignity on the beach chair with his tea cup in his hands, only to have the canopy describe an arc ending in his face and to have the chair fold up under him. Our only intimate contact with the million-dollar patient was the daily order as the doctor passed through the bar, "A double dry Martini for 206."

Or that moment when, down to our last dollar, we had to treat four women from the hotel to the ferry ride from Hamilton to the Inverurie dock, and we were fervently praying for the six cent boat when the eight cent one appeared and we were left with forty-four cents for the rest of our stay.

But we are returning next year and the year after and the year after that, for the isle of quiet happiness has won our hearts.

* * *

Yes, C. W. L., we also had Baked Alaska, and we discovered the mysterious alternation of 8-cent and 6-cent ferry boats.

M. S. H. writes that she sent us two years ago a clipping from the excellent *Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily* which we did not print. We do so now:—

HAMILTON POLICE COURT

Before Wor. H. V. Smith, Friday, July 12, 1929.

Tony Marshall, 35, white, Portuguese, was charged with "Not giving any audible sign when riding past pedestrians on his bicycle," that is by ringing his bell, which is the proper instrument to be used. This offence occurred on Saturday evening, July 6, at about 10.20 p.m. in the Lane, Paget. Accused pleaded Guilty. The Magistrate spoke very sharply on the fact that the practice of using horns, and other abominable nuisances on bicycles, not to warn people, but too often frighten them, was becoming too prevalent and must be put a stop to; but as accused had no other record against him, he ordered him to take his horn off his bicycle and put a bell there, and let him off with a caution.

"Strange," adds M. S. H., "that a police court item can make one smell the cedar."

The only other thing we wish to add is that we hope the Editor we spoke of, now vacationing in Bermuda, will keep an eye open (along the left hand side of the road, somewhere between Tom Moore's cottage and St. George's,) for a well-caked old Weingott pipe.

* * *

One particular Bermudian pleasure was, during the siesta period after lunch, to fall asleep over an English magazine we rarely see in this country—*The Field*. The writing room at Inverurie is well-stocked with this journal, and (as everyone knows) there is no reading-matter so agreeable as British real-estate advertising. Rocking gently in a big wicker chair, with that soft Bermuda breeze rippling in, you brood upon "Genuine Old Cotswold Farmhouse," or "500 Ft. Up on Southern Quantocks, A HOUSE OF GREAT CHARM, dating from Doomsday," or "Overlooking the Glorious Valley of the Wye, 'Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,' Interesting Gabled Residence; splendid pheasant rises; rabbit warren; ¾ of a mile Salmon Fishing." "Peace for the Busy Man," adds the notice; but not, I fear, for the pheasants. "Sufficient Fishing to amuse children" says another advertisement of unusual candor. I like the advertiser who says "Small Park of up to 100 acres desired, but not essential if amenities well preserved." He wants to be within reach of Hunting—"provincial pack not objected to." Under Mr. Snowden's new budget I fear it is going to be harder and harder to preserve the amenities. One advertisement suggests Ireland for "Low Income Tax and Abundance of Sport." Here is Castle Hacket in County Galway, "recently rebuilt and furnished regardless of cost. To be let, fully furnished, on lease. Really good shooting, up to 50 brace of woodcock a day."

Then, among these richly suggestive synopses, suddenly I found an authentic "literary note." Messrs Sharpe and Sons, "Bespoke Bootmakers," Cheltenham print an unsolicited letter—and as it is from the author of a rattling good book, I reprint it:—

THE PATCH, FAREHAM,

21st March, 1931.

DEAR SIR,—You may remember that in May, 1928, you made me two pairs of boots. I took them to South America, using one pair only. That pair is now almost historic. They took me through twelve hundred miles of jungle, and over several hundred miles of The Andes, and they have never been soled. They were so comfortable that I never had to wear either two pairs of socks, or use soap on those I wore. They are as good today, quite literally, as when they came out of your shop (I lived at Box House, Minchinhampton, then). Well, I am still using them. I sail again in April, and my old friends the boots sail too. I shall not even take the second pair.

That is a wonderful record for your manufacture, and I congratulate you most heartily.

Should you wish to hear the tale those boots could have told, borrow *Green Hell* from your library.

Yours very truly,

JULIAN DUGUID.

* * *

There is a pleasant note of hodiernity in a letter written by R. L. Stevenson to Henley in 1884. Referring to a friend of theirs who had been journeying, not always tactfully, in this country, Stevenson said "Let him resist the fatal British tendency to communicate his dissatisfaction with a country to its inhabitants. 'Tis a good idea, but it somehow fails to please."

* * *

The eminent and learned bibliophiles and collectors are now getting back to town after their summer vacations. Some, the lucky, find waiting for them, in the accumulated mail, a new batch of those brilliant red volumes of the *Boswell Papers;* a work of discovery, editing and typography that ensures immortality to Colonel Isham, the late Geoffrey Scott and William Edwin Rudge, and the succeeding editor Frederick A. Pottle. In lapses of ease it delights me to imagine the waggings of the head, tiltings of the eyebrow, secret aquiline glances and sibilated pursings of the lips that must pass mutually among the members of the world's most confidential sodality, the subscribers to the *Boswell Papers*. How much is missed by the readers of mere tabloids.—What more characteristic episode is there in the history of human families than that Boswell's son and heir had Sir Joshua's portrait of Dr. Johnson removed to the attick after his father's death?—Unless it be that Shakespeare's son-in-law could not endure the theatre.

* * *

"Fine rich animal spirits can preserve the mind from being hurt by anything, unless you really wound the spirit itself."—*James Boswell*

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

A Balanced Ration for a Week's Reading

THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER. By RICHARD ALDINGTON. *Doubleday, Doran.*
A satire on the England of post-war days and the story of a girl who sought love hopelessly.

THE FLOWERING STONE. By GEORGE DILLON. *Viking.*
A volume of lyrics by the author of "Boy in the Wind."

THE INSECT MENACE. By L. O. HOWARD. *Century.*
An entomologist's excursion into popular science.

The Saturday Review of Literature

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BOOKS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

World Literature

THE GOLDEN THREAD. By PHILO M. BUCK. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1931. $4.

Reviewed by ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES

IT is not quite clear whether "The Golden Thread" by Professor Buck of the University of Wisconsin is intended to be a popular introduction to world literature or a serious contribution to philosophic thought. In its genesis it was obviously the former, a series of loosely connected lectures, retelling in a pleasant manner the stories of the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, etc., adorned with a variety of well-chosen quotations. In this aspect the book is wholly admirable. But apparently Professor Buck intended much more than this. The popular substance of the book is burdened with a thesis which the author evidently takes with great seriousness—the old contention that through the masterpieces of world literature there runs a common tradition, a golden thread which constitutes the chief value of all the variegated patterns. This common element, Professor Buck insists, is to be found in the "humanist tradition" emphasizing reason and moral freedom, "a vindication of man's moral nature and the intelligibility of his fate."

Beginning with Homer who found life a glorious adventure, Professor Buck goes on to discover in Æschylus "the traditional optimism of joyous youth," thence tracing the theme of man's greatness—shown either in outer action or inner reflection—through "the mystery of tears" and "the mystery of laughter" (Greek tragedy and comedy), "the tragedy of empire" in Virgil, and "the bankruptcy of paganism" in Socrates; a chapter on Hindu mysticism and one on the Bible and the Koran lead on to a discussion of Dante, in whom mysticism, morality, and reason were united; then follow chapters on the temper of the Renaissance as revealed in Cervantes, Montaigne, and Shakespeare, on the creation of the ideal of the modern gentleman by Molière, on the Puritan conscience in Milton, and on the union of romance and science in Goethe, in whom the great tradition ended. The book closes with an elegiac chapter on the decadent nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an era of little men, mere scientists and realists.

Unfortunately, a number of the literary movements which Professor Buck considers do not, even on his own showing, belong to the tradition which they are supposed to illustrate: Hindu mysticism, dragged in with great difficulty; later Greek philosophy and early Christianity with their "escape from life"; the Hebrew and Moslem literatures of moral fanaticism; Cervantes, Montaigne, and Shakespeare, who perhaps may "vindicate man's moral nature"—if one were quite sure what the phrase means—but who certainly do not show "the intelligibility of his fate." An even more serious defect is the lack of any clear definition of the tradition itself. One knows, of course, in a general way what is meant—gets a kind of bowing acquaintance with the tradition—but never comes to close quarters with it. Professor Buck makes much play with what John Dewey calls "honorific words" such as reason and freedom, but their equivocal character is ignored. "Optimistic" is surely a better description of Edgar Guest than of Æschylus or Goethe. All great literature, according to Professor Buck, sets up, either directly or by implication, an ideal of the good life, and this may readily be granted; but his conception of this ideal as something fixed and single, derived from man's universal essence and not relative to his biological and economic conditions, tends to make the whole notion of the good life an academic abstraction.

The book is more interesting as an illustration of the linear habit of mind still dominating the English departments of many of our colleges than for any real contribution to human thought which it has to offer. The conception of one guiding tradition, one type of good life, one golden thread of literature is a beguiling El Dorado of the mind, a lingering dream of discarded teleologies. There are actually many threads which each period gathers into a new skein with added strands of its own creating. To know just what is new and what is traditional in our own ball of twine would be invaluable, but one obtains no help toward such knowledge from the "Golden Thread." One obtains only a vague feeling of uplift, calculated to make literature seem attractive to the unlettered and not unpleasant in itself, which, however, if mistaken for knowledge, would be intellectually demoralizing.

A Puritan Diplomat

FRANCIS DANA. A Puritan Diplomat at the Court of Catherine the Great. By W. P. CRESSON. New York: The Dial Press. 1930.

Reviewed by MILDRED E. LOMBARD
New York University

FRANCIS DANA is remembered, ironically enough, for the one failure of his life. Sixty-four out of the sixty-six years of his life he was a Massachusetts gentleman in his proper setting—a conventional New Englander who went to Harvard, studied law, married well, supported in quiet, unbombastic fashion the revolt against British tyranny, became a member of Congress, and in the post-revolutionary period served his state honorably and well as its chief justice. But in the confused days of the Revolution there were two other years when he was the bewildered and miserable Puritan ambassador of a scorned Yankee Congress at the semi-Oriental court of Catherine of Russia. There inevitably he failed, but there he achieved his niche in the history of American diplomacy.

In the long record of inefficiency and error which marks the history of the Continental Congress, nothing was more misguided than its foreign policy. Europe swarmed with would-be American diplomats. To the farthest courts, the emissaries of the revolting English colonies carried the tidings of American independence and demands for recognition and money and trade. Complete failure in Prussia, Austria, Spain, and Tuscany were not enough to convince the Congress that its policy was a mistaken one, and at the first hint that Russia, in advocating the Armed Neutrality, showed signs of hostility towards England, Francis Dana was despatched post-haste to St. Petersburg. Knowing no language but his own, knowing almost nothing of the intricacies of European politics and less of Russian conditions, fearing the French and refusing to work with them, he went in 1781 to Catherine's court, alone except for his secretary, John Quincy Adams, aged fourteen.

Only one man in St. Petersburg showed evidence of friendliness, Verac, the French minister, and with him Dana, always sharing his colleague John Adams's suspicion of the French, promptly quarrelled. In the barbaric splendors of Catherine's city he was isolated and lonely, unable to secure a hearing, without friends in the most foreign of European capitals, without money in the most expensive. His very innocence of Russian politics saved him from complete discouragement at the start, but as he gradually realized the dissoluteness of the Empress, her preoccupation with lovers and spasmodic interest in foreign policy, the changeable and untrustworthy nature of her ministers, the ugly graft and greed in Russian diplomacy which demanded that the Americans pay thousands of dollars for the privilege of making a treaty of any sort, he grew more and more despondent. Catherine herself he never met; the glamorous lady of All the Russias saw no possibilities in the reports she heard of the young American Puritan who wished audience with her. After two disillusioning years Dana went home, still the unrecognized agent of an unrecognized country, and the pathetic victim of one of the most futile ventures in diplomacy the United States ever made.

The Dana story is a fascinating one, and Dr. Cresson, whose own diplomatic career included services at St. Petersburg, is well fitted to tell it. Much of his work is based on hitherto unused documents kept for over a century in the Dana family and only recently given into the custody of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Many unpublished letters of Dana to John Adams are printed in full or in part in the text, and many others are drawn upon for information regarding Russian economic and political conditions. The biography has, therefore, importance for the source material it contains as well as for its characterization of our first ambassador to Russia.

In view of this general merit, the inaccuracy of statement and conclusion into which Dr. Cresson sometimes falls when discussing certain phases of early American diplomacy is regrettable. Particularly his allusions to the Lees and Izard, Dana's fellow ambassadors in Europe, and to Stephen Sayre are almost uniformly incorrect. Even more annoying is his constant misspelling of certain proper names which should certainly be well enough known to make such error inexcusable. His style is weighty and colorless, but in spite of these faults, for the student of American diplomacy "Francis Dana" will prove a valuable contribution to our knowledge of early Russian-American relations and the odds against which a "Puritan Diplomat at the Court of Catherine the Great" labored.

Voltaire and Brandes

VOLTAIRE. By GEORG BRANDES. New York: Albert & Charles Boni. 1930. $10.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT
University of Colorado

"FOR my part, I take Europe to be worn out. When Voltaire dies, we may say, 'Good night!'" So wrote Horace Walpole in 1774 to his ever-receptive listener in Florence. There is something of smart extravagance in the remark, but it nevertheless reveals the eighteenth century intellectual's attitude towards the French firebrand who illuminated Europe from his retirement at Ferney. It is a revelatory remark, too, because it comes from Walpole, who, with his aristocratic privileges, his British prejudices, and his ascetic tastes, was in no sense a disciple of Voltaire. Again and again elsewhere in his letters he elaborates his distaste for the Voltairean ethics, but even he cannot deny the power and genius of the recluse who was at once the inspiration and the scourge of the age. When Voltaire's importance was so manifest to a hostile contemporary, long before his doctrines and his denunciations had played their part in the cataclysm of the Revolution, how much more strongly are we conscious today of the lasting results of his long warfare against orthodoxy. That warfare accomplished something in Voltaire's own life-time; in the century and a half which have followed his death, its accomplishments, direct and indirect, have been uncountable. We may distrust the materialism which he advocated, we may scorn the methods by which he popularized his views, we may even dislike some of the modern results of his hard-fought battles, but we cannot deny that in science, in government, in jurisprudence, in philosophy, in religion, he has left everywhere the print of his strenuous rationalism.

It is this manifold and lasting importance of Voltaire that the late Georg Brandes has particularly emphasized in this biography. Brandes, himself almost a Voltaire in his love of reason and his hatred of the irrational orthodox, found in Voltaire the fittest of subjects. Throughout his long career as the most formidable of north European critics he carried on the Voltaire torch, and if today his fame seems to be under a cloud, it is partially because the very materialism which he exalted in Voltaire and which he represented in himself is not so consonant to our twentieth century notions. Though Brandes died only a few years ago, his period was definitely the nineteenth century. At that time the ends for which Voltaire had struggled a century before were not yet wholly attained, and no one was more effectual in forwarding those ends than Brandes. Today, however, we look upon the complete freedom of thought and the tolerance for which these Titans fought as a part of our inheritance. We are no longer afraid of the same dragons, for they seem no longer to exist. We have our new monsters, and in fighting them we perhaps forget too easily the useful battles which have been waged before by men like Voltaire and Brandes. Of the two we are less likely to overlook the former because his art and his style, regardless of the subject upon which they were lavished, are perennially fresh in a purely literary way; the latter has to depend upon the solidity of his thinking and the provocativeness of his judgments, qualities less likely to command the widespread attention of posterity. Moreover, Voltaire's unusually exciting career, with all its extraordinary friendships and deeds, will make of him always a fascinating figure, while the less picturesque life of Brandes will probably attract few biographers. Brandes in his long life did many things of which Voltaire himself might have been proud. It was no small achievement to have prepared the way, to have laid the critical foundation, so to speak, for Ibsen and the other giants of the north. But he will never provide in his own life the same material for a future apostle of liberty that Voltaire has provided for him, and which he has so devotedly used in this book.

This is a peculiarly great biography because its author understood his subject perfectly. By his own struggles against the intolerance and stupidity of the Scandinavian nations he was drawn into sympathetic accord with Voltaire, who had struggled against the same narrow-mindedness in eighteenth century France. He shared many of the interests and all of the ideals of his subject, and it is consequently with the most loving care that he describes every scene, illuminates every deed, in his idol's life. His respect and admiration for Voltaire is equal to Boswell's for Dr. Johnson, and the result is that Voltaire's personality is revivified in these pages. It bestrides the eighteenth century like the Rhodesian Colossus, and we see it everywhere, in Paris, in London, at Sans Souci, at Cirey, at Ferney, advising Frederick of Prussia, corresponding with Catherine of Russia, and always plunging into the midst of any controversy in which a blow may be dealt for liberty. Voltaire's purely literary triumphs were many, and Brandes does not minimize them, but it is particularly his scientific, his philosophic, and, even more fervently, his political triumphs which are here glorified. Brandes worships most of all the Voltaire who by persistent and unfailing attacks started the reform of French legal practice. Without Voltaire's wit or his power of compact generalization, Brandes gives us the feeling of both; but it is through the sincerity of his admiration that he really succeeds in making Voltaire live, as no one of the inimical biographers, of whom we have had many, has been able to do. And not the least valuable merit of the book is the light that it sheds, between the lines, as it were, on Brandes himself.

It is a great misfortune that the translation of a book as important as this should be so irritating. Many years have passed since it was first published in Europe, but it would appear from the syntax of this version that the translating had been done hurriedly and carelessly. The idiom is frequently very un-English, pronouns are used so confusingly that it is sometimes difficult to make out to whom they refer, and we cannot even have a quotation from Gibbon in the original Gibbonese.

Writing, in the London *Observer* of the late Frank Harris, Sir Sidney Low says: "He was a man of whom one could not speak in neutral terms; to some who knew him well he seemed fascinating, to others frankly outrageous. But even those who loved him not were bound to accord him a certain admiration. There was so much vitality about the man, such volcanic, if uncontrolled, energy, and quite obvious, though ill-regulated, talent, that one could not fail to find him interesting. In his best days he was a mighty talker, and it was worth while listening when he poured forth, in his vibrant bass, a strange medley of vitriolic satire, fierce criticism, libellous comment, and curiously assorted knowledge of men, women, and books. Withal he was a stark legionary in the army of letters. He had the root of the matter in him, the gift of expression on paper. He knew how to write. You could see that not only in his striking short stories and audaciously original Shakespearean studies, but even in the perverted and offensive books of his later period."

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Keats in His Letters

I DO not believe that the two magnificent volumes of Keats's letters* which Mr. Maurice Buxton Forman has so ably edited will ever displace in my affections the two little ones edited by his father thirty years ago. Of a few books most of us can say that they have become an integral part of our lives—bone of our spiritual bone, flesh of our flesh. I can say it of none so truly as I can of the two little dark-green volumes of the Gowans & Gray edition of Keats's letters. I paid a half-crown for the two of them, twelve years ago: not second-hand. I bought them direct from the publisher. Eighteen years after publication, the first edition was still on sale. Perhaps more people read Keats's letters than bought them; but certainly they were bought by very few in England, even so recently as twelve years ago.

I shared my copy with Katherine Mansfield. She carried it with her in some of her lonely voyagings in search of health, and it has her underlinings—underlinings to me no less painful than the agonizing letters of 1820 themselves. "These letters," she wrote at the end of the book, "written during his fatal illness are terrible to me in my situation. It is frightening that he, too, should have known this mental anguish. . . . Let no man suffer so again! For mingled with all the known suffering is the anguish of despair because *one is ill.* How could anyone let such a thing happen to me at such a time? Or is it my 'fate' because I am ill? Do they treat me as posthumous already? Oh—the agony of life! How does one endure it! Oh, I have suffered too greatly. Nothing can take it away but one thing, and that I am—I feel in my soul—*to be denied.*"

The anguish is identical, the tone indistinguishable. It seems at moments that I scarcely know whether Keats or Katherine Mansfield is speaking. The voice is one, and it tears the heart. Perhaps there is good reason, therefore, that Keats's letters should not be read or bought unduly much. They are *too* agonizing; the normal man hides himself away from such suffering, the tender-hearted man cannot bear it. And, after all, it is no joke to read Keats's letters to the bitter end. I must have read them through twenty times, I know them more or less by heart; but even yesterday, when I came to the end of 1820, I wanted to run away. I had to clench my teeth to go on.

Keats's letters are like the time of tribulation spoken of in the gospels, of which he that endures to the end shall be saved. There is a real salvation in them, for they purge our dross away. Our self-complacency, our shallow optimisms, our vague beliefs in earthly justice—all these are simply burned away. We sit down to read them as Keats sat down to read "King Lear."

> O golden-tongued Romance with serene lute!
> Fair-plumèd Syren, queen of far-away!
> Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
> Shut up thine olden volume and be mute.
> Adieu! for once again the fierce dispute
> Betwixt Hell torment and impassion'd clay
> Must I burn through. . .

The difference is that "King Lear" is only a story, but Keats's letters are a life. The tragedy of "King Lear" is of the kind that art can accommodate; its hero, all too visibly, has the fatal weakness, the tragic flaw. The hero of Keats's letters has none. By all our human standards he was a perfect thing—generous, warm-hearted, just, manly, sensitive. Yet the bitter cry is wrung from him at the last. "Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire within my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much, so much misery. Was I born for this end?"

Who shall claim to understand this destiny? Yet, in some sense, we must understand it, or life becomes for us a meaningless futility. For this life of Keats *is* life: concentrated, quintessential. We may turn aside from the naked impact with the old, old excuses. Keats was abnormal, Keats was consumptive. Assuredly, he was both. But, in his case, abnormal means nothing if it does not mean supernormal; if it does not mean that he saw more clearly, felt more keenly, suffered more profoundly, and attired himself more perfectly than the ruck of men. Because he was abnormal he is infinitely precious to us. But he was consumptive? Fact again. But what does it *mean?* Stevenson, Chekov, Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Jules Lafargue—there are a handful of consumptives of the last fifty years. Common to them all is that quality which Keats commemorated in his consumptive youngest brother—"Tom, with his exquisite love of life." That is the perfect phrase to describe them all. An exquisite love of life, together with the power to utter and communicate it, by the magic of the written word to compel us momentarily to participate in it. But, first and last, exquisite, exquisite.

Which then comes first? Is it the consumption that refines and makes more sensitive the most delicate responses of the organism? Or is it the exquisite responsiveness of the organism that undermines the biological basis of existence? It seems to me that it must rather be the latter. Were it not so, we should expect to find in all consumptives a kindred delicacy of response. We do not find that, or anything like it. What we do seem to find is that in organisms with an original and abnormal delicacy of response, the advent of consumption intensifies the responsiveness. "I muse," said Keats after his first hemorrhage, and Katherine Mansfield underlined it after hers, "with the greatest affection on every flower I have known since my infancy—their shapes and colors are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy." But the delicate response, his exquisite love of life, was there long before; and I cannot but believe—in a matter where medical science must needs confess an equal ignorance—that in these chosen organisms, it is the sheer strain put on them by the intensity of their various responsiveness that leads, almost inevitably, to the biological breakdown which manifests itself as tuberculosis. Their bacillus under the microscope, I doubt not, is the same as any other consumptive's bacillus; but the occasion and opportunity for it to begin its fatal operations is peculiarly their own. Flesh and blood cannot bear up against the demands made upon them by the intensity of their sensational life. In his very last letter, Keats recognized this, when he wrote to Brown:

> There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, etc., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach.

It is like Keats to have let drop a profound dictum concerning the poetic nature (at least as he experienced and understood it) in his last despairing letter. The "information (primitive sense)" of which he speaks here is precisely that faculty, which he tried to explain in a famous letter to Woodhouse (October 27, 1818) on the poetical character, of completely identifying himself with some object other than himself. "A poet," he said to Woodhouse, "is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no identity—he is continually in for and fulfilling some other body." Probably Keats actually wrote, or meant to write, "informing"; but that is immaterial: the process is the same. "If a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and peck about the gravel." This strange faculty, so remote from most of us ordinary beings, was conspicuously possessed by two creatures of genius whom I have known: Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield. She speaks of it in a letter.

> When I pass an apple stall I cannot help stopping and staring until I feel that I, myself, am changing into an apple, too, and that at any moment I can produce an apple, miraculously, out of my own being, like the conjurer produces the egg . . . When I write about ducks, I swear that I am a white duck with a round eye, floating on a pond fringed with yellow blobs and taking an occasional dart at the other duck with the round eye, which floats upside down beside me. In fact the whole process of becoming the duck (what Lawrence would perhaps call this consummation with the duck or the apple!) is so thrilling that I can hardly breathe, only to think about it. For although that is as far as most people can get, it is really only the "prelude." There follows the moment when you are *more* duck, *more* apple, or more Natasha than any of these objects could ever possibly be, and so you *create* them anew.

This is what Keats meant by "information"; and the faculty, or rather the imperious and instinctive necessity, of thus "informing" the world of his experience left him, as he said, without any "identity," or real unchanging self, in the ordinary sense of the term. There was in him a continual and complete self-surrender to the object of experience, actual or imagined. The novel judgment, the steadfast principle which in his view distinguished "the man of character," were in him continually in abeyance. Hence his insistence on the need for him of a life of sensations rather than thoughts," which so many people have taken with stupid liberalness, and so few have tried to understand in relation to his rare organic composition. What is hidden beneath the phrase is Keats's acknowledgment that all his vital experience was of this immediate and self-annihilating kind.

> When I am in a room with people, if ever I am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of every one in the room begins to so press upon me that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of children. (October 27, 1818)

"I know not," he added to Woodhouse, "whether I make myself wholly understood." And indeed it was not easy to understand; nor is it now. But the fact, for those who wish to understand, is plain. The common texture of Keats's experience was the abnormal thread of ours. The sense of self-annihilation, of complete and overwhelming sensation, that we know, for instance, as spectators of a great tragedy played upon the stage, was more or less continual with Keats. The whole poem "Sleep and Poetry"—the first in which he gave full promise of his powers to come—is in reality the record of one such prolonged "sensation." When, in April, 1817, he began to write "Endymion," he thought "so much about poetry so long together" that "in a week or so he became not over capable in the upper stories." The description he then gave to Leigh Hunt of his "continual burning of thought" and its effects was endorsed by his friend Dilke in after-years as "an exact picture of the man's mind and character." "He could," Dilke added, "at any time have 'thought himself out' mind and body. Thought was intense with him, and seemed at times to assume a reality that influenced his conduct—and I have no doubt helped to wear him out."

The evidence is valuable, coming from one whom Keats recognized as the antipodes of himself on such matters; and the point to be grasped is that when Keats distinguishes between a life of thoughts and a life of sensations, and declares for the life of sensations, it is not because he thought less, or desired to think less than other men, but because he thought more, and thought differently. In him thought, by its sheer intensity, took on the nature of sensation. It is true enough that he had no delight in, and no aptitude for, abstract cogitation. He did not think, nor want to think, until he was compelled to; that is the real personal burden of his famous letter on The Chamber of Maiden Thought.

> We no sooner get into the second chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there forever in delight. However, among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of men—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and Oppression—whereby this chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages.

WHEN the time came for thinking, thinking was a clamorous necessity to Keats. He did not think until he must, but when he must he thought with the whole of himself,—with all his mind, and all his heart, and all his soul, on matters of eternal moment to man. By some special gift of the gods, what he called "the thinking principle" was awakened slowly in him; it unfolded gradually as a flower, in the sunlit air of immediate and authentic experience. Some profound instinct preserved him from the danger of allowing thought to anticipate, and thus to supplant, experience. Again and again he declares as a simple fact of his nature that "even a proverb was no proverb to him until his life had illustrated

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* THE LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS. Edited by MAURICE BUXTON FORMAN. New York: The Oxford University Press. 1931. $14.

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by J. Middleton Murry

it"; he must always prove things, not by demonstration or argument, but "upon his pulses." And even in that account which I have quoted of his passing out of the first Chamber of Maiden Thought, the language is instinctively chosen to accord with the curious organic wholeness of his mental activity. Unconsciously, he demonstrates to us that thought was truly sensation in him. This "breathing," this "convincing one's nerves"—these are phrases which could never have occurred save to a man of Keats's peculiar constitution and genius: what is to us, and even to most men of genius, an operation of the mind, was *in him an operation of the body. In truth, it is an* operation of the body, but we can recognize that only by a specific and directed action of the mind. We have no immediate awareness of the fact. Keats had, and it was constant with him.

Keats's peculiar fondness for the word "sensation" is thus, when rightly understood, an index of his strange, yet completely natural, originality. He knew, by actual and immediate experience, a unity in himself which is for other men hardly more than a speculative possibility, and even that only for few. He was one of Nature's most beautiful and most astonishing experiments; and he paid a heavy price for this election to significance. But if his suffering was intense, we may be consoled by the thought that his joys were intense also—the one as the other beyond the normal human range. Still, the deeper question remains: Was the experiment a failure? It is clear enough—or clear to me—that such an organization of human life as Nature made trial of in Keats is precarious. Keats himself knew it well. "I think," he wrote to Reynolds in August, 1819, "if I had a free and healthy and lasting organization of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox's so as to be able to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone though it should last eighty years." The surrender of the total self to experience, which was as instinctive and necessary with Keats, as a certain withholding of the self is with ordinary natures, put a tremendous strain upon the organism. The demand was too great. Keats, the mortal man, was burned out like tinder. Nor do I believe, as some would like to believe, that had he been born a hundred years later, the advance in our medical knowledge would have prolonged his life. There would have been no essential prolongation. A few years might have been added; but his achievement would have been no greater. To save Keats's life, the doctor (even to-day) would have to change Keats's nature. Turn him into an ox, and he might have lived to eighty; but with nothing more than the name in common with the Keats we know.

If we look deeper, and refuse the specious diversions of a shallow naturalism, we shall find that the true condition on which a Keats may be kept alive is that the world must be changed. "The world is too brutal for me," he cried in his last anguish. The cry is not, in itself, typical of him: he was a brave and joyful man. But, in essence, it is the same complaint which he made, without the excruciating anguish, years before, that a man must needs have the fine point of his soul blunted to make headway against life. What wore Keats out were the thoughts (with the intensity of sensations) which came to him as he explored the dark passages; sensations of "the misery and heartbreak, the pain, sickness, and oppression" of which the world is full. On these he brooded, to these he was totally delivered up. In his unflinching submission to these, he came to feel his mission as a poet.

> None can usurp this height (return'd that shade)
> But those to whom the miseries of the world
> *Are misery, and will not let them rest.*

He did usurp the height; he became "a miserable and mighty poet of the human heart." If he had looked upon the world to-day, his pain would have been only a little less. In these fundamental things the world changes so slowly that we can scarcely perceive it.

Still, it does change. And Keats knew that. "There is really," he cried triumphantly to Reynolds, at the conclusion of one of his heart-searching inquiries, "there is really a grand march of intellect." Keats believed this; but he did not believe in the millennium. There would always be, there must always be, pains and troubles in the world "to school an intelligence and make it a soul." In this process of soul-creation, he thought, lay the true, as distinct from the fallacious, perfectibility of man. This simple and profound doctrine I believe to be essentially identical with the teaching of the founder of Christianity; and there lurks within it the same element of paradox. For if the world of pains and troubles is necessary to the process of soul-creation, why should the world be changed? And the answer is that it is precisely by the instrumentality of these rare men with the instinctive incapacity to do other than submit themselves wholly to experience that the world is veritably changed. Science and invention change the outward conditions of human life; but the inward and radical change of the human being himself comes from the influence, undermined by lapse of years, of the heroic individual soul. And this also was Keats's belief. In the most memorable of all his letters, one unsurpassed in all literature for swiftness of insight and spontaneity of life-wisdom, he points us to the truth.

> I go among the Fields and catch a glimpse of a stoat or a fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass—the creature hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it. I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a Man hurrying along—to what? the creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. But then, as Wordsworth says, "we have all one human heart"—there is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify—so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of new heroism. The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish. I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two—Socrates and Jesus—their histories evince it. What I heard a little time ago Taylor observe with respect to Socrates, may be said of Jesus—that he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by men interested in the pious frauds of religion. Yet through all this I see his splendor.

Trust Keats for seeing that. And as he was responsive to that new birth of heroism, that sudden incandescence of the electric fire which tends to purify the human animal into a new and finer being, so are we responsive to the new birth of heroism that was manifest to the world in Keats himself. Through these men the electric current passes; we feel it, and in spite of all the reluctance of our day we change.

NO. Keats was no failure. He was one of those who wring victory for humanity out of utter defeat; those who die because the hearts of man will not change, and dying change them. I do not believe it is possible for any man to read the letters of Keats with the humility, and submissiveness to the pure experience which the reading demands, without being changed: subtly and imperceptibly he becomes a different man, who has learned something of the mystery of charity. Charity—in this humane wisdom and the high Christian tradition are at one—is the supreme spiritual achievement. It is that absolute and universal tolerance, not only of others but of oneself also, by which man attains the divine, and "*earthly power doth then show likest God's,*" or is indeed his own. Of this supreme charity Keats's letters are a treasure-house. We see in them how manly, how brave, yet how natural, how rare, yet how robust a virtue it is; how compatible with anger and indignation, how incompatible with meanness or resentment: above all, how unselfish and unself-conscious. Of the implacable unselfishness of the professional well-doer it contains no trace. That is, at bottom, merely an indulgence of the ego; the unselfishness of Keats is its opposite, and proceeds from an habitual and unwilled obliteration of the ego. It was, indeed, implicit in the poetical character itself, as he understood it, or rather as it came to self-knowledge in him. "It is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—it has no character. . . . What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chancelor poet."

And it is the virtuous philosopher, who lurks within us all, who cannot understand Keats. It was the virtuous philosopher in Matthew Arnold who induced him to raise his hands in pious horror at the "vulgarity" of Keats's love-letters; it was the deeper and enduring part of him that blotted out these priggish deprecations in the final, impulsive surrender: "He is; he is with Shakespeare." And so it is with us all. Keats summons up in us flashes of an understanding which we did not know we possessed. Or rather he creates that faculty of understanding in us. We have, under his compulsive influence, to give up the parade of principle, and let our determined characters go hang; we have to loose our desperate hold on consecutive reasoning, and trust to whatever we possess of a finer faculty if we are to follow the swift flight of his thought. He is a poet with the power of making us, at least for a moment, poets too.

BECAUSE he was so beautiful a unity, the barest scraps of fresh material are precious. They are part of a living whole. There is not much in Mr. Maurice Buxton Forman's splendid edition which will be absolutely new to close students of Keats's letters, though it is a blessing indeed to have all the new material gathered together. Most of the new letters had been made known to us before by Amy Lowell. But in innumerable places Mr. Forman has silently corrected old mis-readings—so silently, indeed, that only those who know the letters well, or diligently collate the old edition and the new, will mark the changes. One of the most notable, and particularly relevant to the argument of this essay, is the change of the last two words in the following passage of the letter to George of September, 1819, in which Keats announced that he had abandoned "Hyperion." It formerly read:

> I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written but is (? as) the verse of art. I wish to devote myself to another verse alone.

What Keats really wrote was: "I wish to devote myself to another sensation." This is in exact accord with his almost simultaneous announcement of his changed intention to Reynolds. "Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humor. I wish to give myself up to other sensations." To give himself up to a sensation—such was Keats's natural way of describing the posture of his being when he wrote the "Ode to Autumn." He meant the total surrender of himself, the overcoming of the inward division that was implicit in "the artist's humor." For that, self-consciousness was necessary; and for Keats self-consciousness was a strained and unnatural attitude. It was, if not wrong in itself, but wrong for him. "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."

That is, no doubt, a counsel of unattainable perfection for men of a different order from Keats. With him, however, it was instinctive wisdom. We feel that it is true. His poetry itself convinces us. At its most mysterious and magical it is so manifestly effortless; and in this supreme quality only Shakespeare's verse can stand comparison with it. Not that no effort was involved. Keats's poetry is profound, and such profundity never came to any man without effort. But the effort was of a different kind, and made at a different time. It preceded the utterance. The effort lay in the instinctive adjustment of the total self to experience until Keats was free to write with the whole of him. At the last, the poetry did come naturally to him as the leaves to a tree in springtime; but he had endured a winter.

> Four seasons fill the measure of the year;
> Four seasons are there in the mind of man.

Of this deep, natural, and unconscious kind were the efforts of Keats. He did not suffer the tyrannous mind to interfere in the hidden resolutions of his being. He was content to make his heart his "mind's Bible—the mind's experience, the text from which the mind or intelligence sucks its identity." He was content to do it; but he could not do otherwise: for he seems to have been born to a wisdom that others acquire only at a great price, if they acquire it at all.

John Middleton Murry, author of the foregoing article, the husband of the late Katherine Mansfield, is the editor of the Adelphi, *and author among a number of other books of "Keats and Shakespeare."*

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Some Recent Fiction

South African Milieu

THE SONS OF MRS. AAB. By SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN. New York: Horace Liveright. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by CLINTON SIMPSON

WE have come to expect good novels of South Africa from Mrs. Millin. This is another written more or less in her usual vein. It is a story of two sons, one an imbecile and the other exceptionally favored in physique and temper, living together in a South African town under the softly dominating will and love of their mother. Mrs. Aab is a woman of small desires but large pride, who spends her life sorting cull diamonds at a "diggings" in South Africa rather than return with her imbecile son to her parents, who disapproved of her marriage. Gideon is her strong son, a talented and definitely promising boy who might have broken away from the empty life of the "diggings" and done something more than waste his life in a routine if it had not been for his brother's weakness and need of care. The mother spends her utmost strength for the imbecile, Hercules, and willingly sacrifices —or so it seems—the elder and stronger brother for him.

Each of these characters is defeated, caught in a mesh of frailty, unfavorable circumstances, and fate that grinds out their lives into nothing. After a lifetime of struggle, Gideon loses what hope he had of money and freedom, and his mother, when threatened with separation in different public institutions, kills herself and Hercules in order that they should "stay together." Gideon's wife dies while he is kept from her through lack of money. Gideon himself is corrupted and befouled through the miserable circumstances of his life, giving up hope at last in the face of lack of opportunity.

Mrs. Millin relentlessly, if compassionately, pictures human suffering, frustration, and misery in this novel, as in most of her others. Whites and Kaffirs alike, in her South African town, struggle under a cruel and implacable fate that sends them all to defeat. The town itself seems blighted, with its ugly open diamond pits, bare corrugated iron houses, and dun-colored river. Everybody in it leads the most circumscribed life, the men for the most part spending their time between work, Kaffir women, and whiskey.

Mrs. Millin is a writer sure of herself and able to gain the effects she wants. Her craftsmanship has never shown to better advantage than in this novel. Her South African town is, however, pretty much like all the other South African towns in her books, though well and carefully done. Her portraits of negroes and half-breeds, fine as they are, will also seem nothing new to readers of her previous work. The major characters in this book are excellent in their turn, though their actions do seem at times arbitrary. The characters at best belong on the level of the queer and (in Hercules) the grotesque. It is a feat to write a novel that is realistic at all about such people. For a novelist of Mrs. Millin's powers, it shows rare patience with meager material.

In the Byways

THE CHAMPION FROM FAR AWAY. By BEN HECHT. New York: Covici-Friede, Inc. 1931. $2.50.

READING a volume of stories by Ben Hecht is like walking past a fence covered with brightly-colored circus posters. You look at the posters, or you read the stories, and are impressed more deeply perhaps than you realize at the time. Some of them (either stories or posters) you will be able to recall in detail and, to your own surprise, long afterward. Ben Hecht uses the same kind of technique as the men who make the posters. If figures are to be outlined, he makes them bold and simple—*too* clear; if color is to be applied, he makes it raw. The result may be crude, but it creates strong impressions.

Take a story like "The Champion from Far Away," the title story in this volume. It is certain that Hecht meant this story to be entertaining, and little else. As entertainment it is excellent. It is a tale of a giant Russian who comes to America and lets himself be ballyhooed and promoted as a professional wrestler. The account of his wanderings over half the globe, his meeting with the sports racketeer, and the inflation and puncture of his bubble reputation might have a deeper interest if he were a real character. But for purposes of entertainment a lay figure is enough, and the story has humor and gusto. The giant is a giant, first of all, and (to prove our point) exhibits exactly two reactions, one to sex and one to hunger.

"Baby Milly and the Pharaoh" is, on the other hand, more than an entertaining story, and differs from all the others in the volume. This story of a wily old Jew, head of a mammoth movie combine, and his downfall through a sentimental folly might have been a great story if the author had made his chief characters as real as Mr. Friede, the assistant Pharaoh. Hecht shows in this story that he can write with realism and bitter, sardonic humor. The intrigue, the heartless plotting, and the kittenish pleasure with which his subordinates pull the old bear from his stool make an absorbing and truly compelling story.

The other stories in the volume are concerned with a number of other heroes, or mock-heroes, and also a few human freaks and wonders. "The Bull That Won" is a clever story about a bull-fighter who followed his mistress to New York and thereupon lost his fighting nerve. "The Shadow" is an ingenious story of a supernatural impersonation and an adultery—a ghost adultery. The last five stories in the volume are stories of horror and are pretty horrible. I mean they are pretty bad, because they are merely horrible.

Hecht writes with gusto about all his queer characters, and misuses style in his usual violent manner. Sex is "the thing half-sleeping in her veins," which "lay in a glimmering sleep in her eyes," and "made an enigmatic sound behind the throaty words of her talk." His writing has power. He does not create many real characters or teach us much about human beings, but he carries us along with him into strange byways and shows us grotesque sights and makes us listen to unearthly sounds. In other words, he is an eccentric but a forceful writer.

The Land of Opportunity

SUNRISE IN THE WEST. By DAVID CARB. New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam. 1931. $2.

Reviewed by ROBERT B. MACDOUGALL

FOR the three Rosenbaum girls America certainly was the land of opportunity, the sunrise in the west. Just before the Civil War they left their home near Karlsruhe and came to New Orleans, knowing no one, having no idea of how they were to find food or shelter. But fate was kind, and before many years they had husbands and a certain amount of security. Mr. Carb follows their fortunes through three generations, not only chronicling the vital statistics of the clan but also giving more than a little attention to the growing up of the far South after the Civil war, especially New Orleans and Fort Worth. These descriptions of the early South and Southwest are by no means the least engaging parts of the book.

The novel is written sympathetically, with a sound sense of what is generally important to ordinary people, and it is almost always good reading. If it never actually takes hold of us, the fault is probably in the poor proportioning of the story. Very nearly half the book is occupied with the efforts of the girls to break away from their home in Germany, and as a result of this undue emphasis the rest of the narrative becomes hurried and jumbled. The evidence indicates that Mr. Carb wrote the last hundred pages much too fast for the good of his novel; the tone and the texture alter unforgivably when the speeding-up process begins. Otherwise, however, and throughout the novel, there are definite merits.

John o' London's Weekly has been conducting a symposium on how authors choose the titles for their books. Here is Compton Mackenzie's statement as to his methods.

"I took the title of Sinister Secret from an etching I once saw, which I rather fancy was by that prince of etchers, Muirhead Bone. 'Carnival' was suggested by my wife's often playing Schumann's Carnaval to me about the time I was planning out the book. The original title I chose was 'London Pride,' but a play came out with that title and robbed me of it.

"Sylvia Scarlett was probably a reminiscence of an unwritten novel by R. L. Stevenson which was to be called Sophia Scarlett, though I was not conscious of that when I chose my heroine's name."

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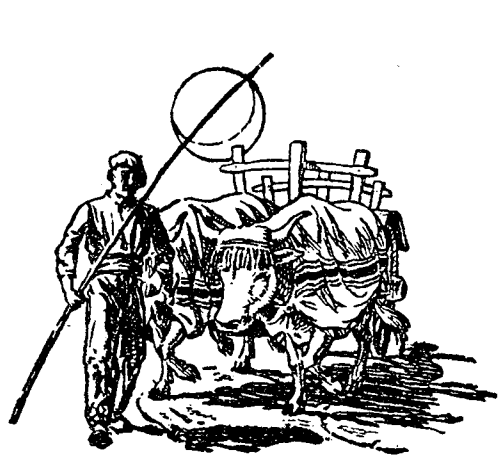

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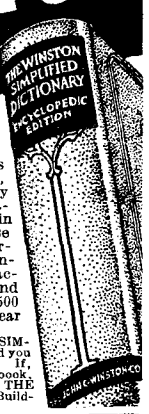

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Round About Parnassus

By WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

I HAVE been reading three new books of poems, two of which are mature testifyings in regard to human existence, and one the testimony of youth. The three books are by James Stephens, Witter Bynner,* and George Dillon. Stephens's past accomplishment, both in poetry and in prose, is the greatest. Bynner is now a veteran poet with about ten books of different kinds to his credit. George Dillon is one of the most brilliant of the younger men. Stephens's present volume, "*Strict Joy*" (Macmillan), is small in actual bulk, Bynner's a long, intimate testament, Dillon's is this poet's second volume including thirty-eight poems. I read Bynner's "*Eden Tree*" (Knopf) first, then I read Stephens, and felt that one could aptly comment upon Bynner's book in some of Stephens's words; and when I came to George Dillon's "*The Flowering Stone*" (Viking), I encountered the dicta of artistic youth as contrasted to those of artistic maturity. As I read Bynner first, let us take the three books in that order.

All three poets are craftsmen of distinction, that may be said immediately. To judge by these three books, isolated from the rest of each poet's work, Dillon appears to me to exercise the most delicate and subtle craft. Compared with his workmanship, Bynner's seems rather too facile. But it is of decided interest because it is the artist's endeavor to explain his life in a long, connected narrative of the spirit's journey.

The influence of one remembered person upon the shaping of Bynner's philosophy of life was apparent in his earlier work. She was always referred to as Celia. She imbued him, in part, with a large democratic vision of the world. She embodied for him the highest spiritual values. Her influence is still upon him in this poem, persisting even after he specifically declares that she belonged to one phase of his existence and must be left behind. Next, as a great influence upon him, he tells of a man of whom he speaks as Paul. He then becomes involved in an allegory of the life of the flesh in which he is Adam outcast from Eden who returns to find in the serpent the Lilith of legend, who exercises upon him for some length of time an incurable fascination; Eve standing, as I read the poem, among other things for conventional mating, for the normality of life which the poet cannot accept. First, Celia has become a pursuing memory, then Paul, who also died. To me one of the most moving passages in the poem is a brief one at the end of a description of finding Paul after "foregoing Celia," or, rather, the memory of Celia.

I seemed to watch while Blake was drawing him,
"In the beginning was the Word,"—"That is all ye need to know,"
All that I needed—till the entire sun
Went out one day, when death came quick as life. It was long ago,
It was yesterday, it was tomorrow, it was done.

Section XIII is of equal poignance. The poet has travelled far with his loneliness, he has tried to find and hold the understanding of life that Confucius knew in China, to shake off "the paramour with no caress." And suddenly keener than ever comes upon him the remembrance of friends that died. He cries to Celia:

O please
Be forever dead and not this endless dying!
How can you undo
Death so often and return, like spring in the trees
And then autumn? I can hear now the sighing
Of your leaves as they come and then go each year.
Is it you or the leaves that are here?

Then he becomes to himself both David, the young poet, singing, and Saul, the old king, listening. From this vision he seeks nepenthe with Lilith in the essential emptiness of lust. After that he enters a cathedral, and contemplates that which he can only see as the rituals of the living interminably recrucifying and betraying Christ. He returns to his room to argue with himself against the domination of Lilith.

There is no end to desire,
Murmured Adam, no end
To the presence of Lilith and to the forgetting
Of Eve.

His emotion begets prayer to be "anything, but no more I," from which he immediately revolts against his complaining. Next he contemplates family life under the shade of the family-tree and revolts from that also, returning to the allegorical Lilith, and murmuring wild poetic things to a street-woman in an agony to grasp some spiritual reality. Naturally it is all beyond his companion's comprehension. The writing of this scene and of the morning one, XIX, that follows, is an example of the mixture of poetry and wit which Bynner can occasionally render most effective; the intensity of the dreamer impinging upon matter-of-factness. The poet then contemplates his identity, his difference, himself as his own god; he leaves the city for the mountains, where he finds a certain peace; he returns to Eve, in the allegory, finds her jealous of Lilith and too humdrum to content him; he seeks back for his youth and finds an idyll and the tragedy of another ending in a southern adventure; he returns to the city and experiences an exhilaration in drink, that takes him out of himself for a while and gives him a mirage of happiness; this wears through, and he quite naturally decides that there is more to life than mere inebriation and passion; he returns in his mind to his childhood, ponders the loss of certain friends, would recapture the "blessed companionship" of early days; he speaks to his mother of his crucifixion. He is crucified on the essential loneliness of spirit that we all find at last. He contemplates the various aspects of this crucifixion. Finally in a clearing, at a lake's edge, he finds the cross of his vision is gone, and entering the water he recognizes

Its liquid touches moulding him with its fingers, taking him away
From loneliness, away from his own shape
Into a shape beyond discovery, beyond Escape.

This termination is, of course, no real termination, as life provides no real endings. But what the lines quoted above really mean may well be the same as this poem by James Stephens on page 45 of "Strict Joy."

He dares to be alone! He dares
Waste, and blank, and mystery:
Not desolation, dreadful airs,
Not silence, nor the clamoring sea
Can edge his wise tranquillity,
Nor fret his joy—
For only this,
To be sufficient and alone,
Is joy, and joy's rewarding kiss,
Is ecstasy, and all of bliss
That bird, or man, or god hath known.

Bynner's passing comments upon normal existence, the religious feeling in man, normal mating, and so on, can hardly be said to exhaust all such great matter for argument. But he has tried honestly to tell the story of his wanderings, with the motivation as he sees it. All three books before us say the same thing in the end, though the experiences of all three poets has differed widely,—namely, that any serious contemplation of life, one's own and that of others, saddens with the recognition of so much futility and fatuity,—that the life of the spirit is simply the constant search for a profounder satisfaction than it seems to be in the nature of existence to offer. Stephens, in his first poem, recommends to the artist, "Fly to thy talent! To thy charm! . . . This is, naught else is, certainty." The practice of an art is a satisfaction worn like an amulet against all life's disillusionments. As to grief, one of the best of Stephens's poems in this book, "Strict Care, Strict Joy," is deeply humorous and sane in its asseveration that the poet

as he meditated misery
And cared it into song—strict care, strict joy!
Caring for grief he cared his grief away.

That last line is almost Shakespearian in the compact statement of its insight. We have said that Stephens's book is slight in bulk. But it has some of his inimitable touches. The slight "Reverie on a Rose" is a characteristic picture of the impatient feminine. "Theme and Variations," addressed to Stephen MacKenna, takes up half of the little volume. It has charming lyricism and enters into more mysticism, with over-much capitalization, than does Bynner. But my own belief chimes with one of the profoundest statements of the book, after an harassed description by Stephens of how all

(*Continued on page* 140)

* Mr. Bynner's volume will be reviewed by Louis Untermeyer in a forthcoming issue of *The Saturday Review.*

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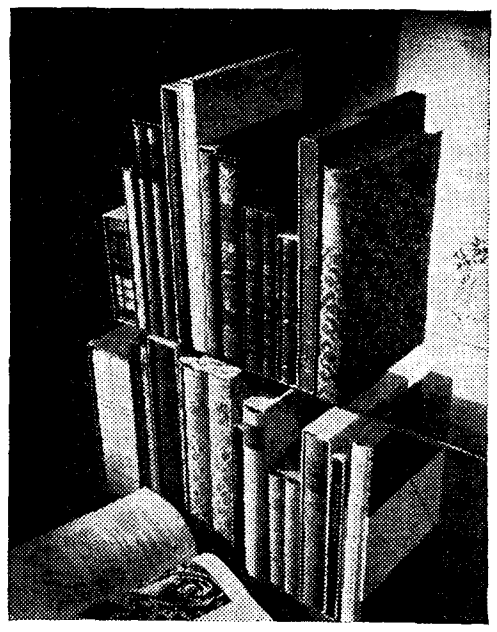

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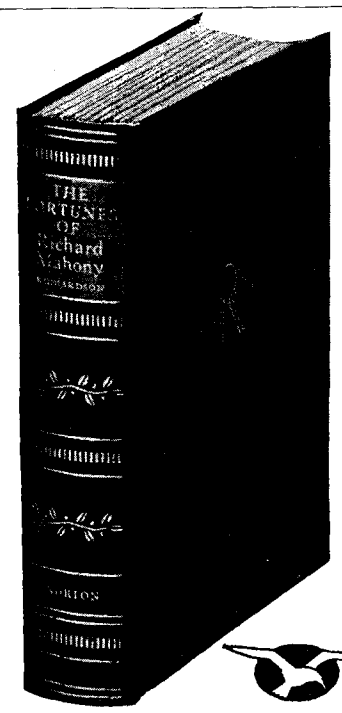

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Foreign Literature

German Women-Historians

ALTE UND NEUE GÖTTER. By RICARDA HUCH. Zurich: Deutsch-schweizerische Verlags-Anstalt. 1931.

ENRICA VON HANDEL-MAZETTI: Persönlichkeit, Werk und Bedeutung. Munich: Verlag Kösel und Pustet. 1931.

FRAU RICARDA HUCH recently received the Goethe Prize, and the leading German woman writer was thus honored as was her due. Born in 1864 she took to writing at about the age of twenty-five, and had shown a decided gift for historical writing before she was thirty. She also published poems — under the masculine pseudonym of "Richard Hugo"—and fiction, a good deal of which will undoubtedly survive. But her reputation was really made by her two works on the German Romantic Movement, the "Blütezeit der Romantik," and "Ausbreitung und Verfall der Romantik," which were published in 1899 and 1902 respectively, by her still incomplete prose-epic of the Italian Risorgimento, and by her great historical picture of Germany in the time of the Thirty Years War, the volume entitled "Der Grosse Krieg und Deutschland," which appeared only two years before Germany was engaged in a far greater war than that of which the historian treated. With this book Ricarda Huch's reputation was firmly established, and although a German critic of that time was rather beside the mark in prophesying that her style was of the kind that would prevail in 1920—he did not forsee the rise of Expressionism—he might have added with truth that by that year Ricarda Huch's standing in German literature, already considerable, would be even higher. Now, with her latest work, and her reception of the Goethe Prize, she has been acclaimed by the German reviews as one of the foremost living German writers, and in any case the most notable of German women writers of today, numerous though the competent women writers of contemporary Germany are.

A few years ago, after the war, Ricarda Huch wrote a little volume of essays entitled "Entpersönlichung"; it dealt with the "de-personalisation" of modern social and political life. At about the same time she wrote a study of the anarchist, Michael Bakunin, in contrast to Karl Marx. Both writings showed her personal point of view, that of the liberal individualist. The rigid centralization that seemed to be the direction in which modern politics were moving filled her with misgiving, and it is no surprise to us to learn that at a very early age she, in sympathy with her mother, conceived a dislike and suspicion of Bismarck. In this latest work of hers, a series of sketches of German politicians from Stein to Bismarck, her early antipathy and her personal political sympathies are easily to be described. "Alte und Neue Götter" is, in effect, a brilliant personal study of the forces that influenced the development of Germany after the Napoleonic Wars until the war of 1870. It should not be inferred that the writer has written a thesis; she has no particular case to prove against Bismarck and his work, but as an imaginative writer she cannot disguise her sympathies, and in her delineation—often a truly brilliant delineation—of the outstanding personalities of German political history during the first seventy years of the nineteenth century, it is clear that, for this woman historian, it is the liberal, federal, agrarian ideal of Freiherr von Stein that represents the vanished Paradise, and the modern industrial state, efficient, hard, powerful, but unimaginative, at bottom discontented, that represents the hard fate to which Germany was condemned by the achievement of the "Junker Bismarck."

In between these two extremes there is a remarkable gallery of portraits, above all of the various German revolutionary leaders and their great antagonists. George Herwegh, Georg Büchner, Engels, Marx, Stüve, Max Stirner, Freiligrath—these are portrayed with a practised hand, and against them stand Friedrich Wilhelm the Fourth, Radowitz, Friedrich List. In all these pages of well-documented description of the interplay of political forces and ideas there are many paragraphs of almost startling application to the present day. The chapter on "Grossdeutsch oder Kleindeutsch" — the great and decisive problem for Germany before her unification under Prussia, whether she should include Austria or not—is of great interest now that the "Anschluss" question is so much in the air. The study of the Communist Manifesto illuminates the Bolshevik Revolution, and this latter event is shown to have been, in some sense, foreseen by Radowitz, who towards the end of his life insisted that the withdrawal of moral sanctions from politics would leave power only with the army or the proletariat. The same statesman also held for inevitable the break-up of Austria into her component parts, a process which would hasten the formation of "Mitteleuropa." A general European pact among governments to restrict their armaments to an agreed figure was also regarded by him as a certainty of the future. This was in 1853. And it is of piquant interest to find Freiherr von Stein, in the early part of the century, exclaiming: "We are overpopulated; we have overmanufactured, overproduced, are overfed," and adding: "The aim and object of society is not the greatest possiple production of foodstuffs and industrial materials, but the spiritual, moral, and religious ennoblement of man." From this ideal Frau Ricarda Huch clearly feels we have sadly departed, and have been more and more departing since Bismarck's triumph. In the various men whose characters she has sketched, she depicts the growth and fruition of powers which those same men symbolized. It is a work of profound interest for our own day.

Frau Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti is the well-known Austrian historical novelist, who early this year celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of her birth, and the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of her first novel, "Meinrad Helmpergers Denkwürdiges Jahr." This volume is a composite tribute, by several admirers and friendly critics, to the novelist's personality and literary achievement. Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti, as one of the best of the essays points out, is the voice of baroque Austria. Her profound Catholic faith, her intense attachment for her country, her very style—all these are essentially of the Counter-Reformation. Yet she is not a mere pious religious fiction-writer. Many non-Catholic German critics have praised the impartiality and force of her creations, and it may be mentioned that it was once suggested that her work might be denounced in Rome for having promoted a kind of "indifferentism." The ultra-zealous folk from whom these suggestions came did not pursue their design, and Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti remains one of the most important figures in orthodox German Catholic literature, yet with literary gifts that entitle her to the respect of all students of historical fiction.

As one of the essays in this volume points out, before her coming German ecclesiastical history had indeed been treated in German fiction by competent writers, Ebers, for example, but in a spirit far removed from that of the Church. Now, for perfect imaginative sympathy at least, an understanding of Catholic dogma is needed. The misfortune was that those writers who had the latter too often lacked the necessary literary gifts, and fiction on German historical religious themes was therefore either hostile, or negligible as literature. The German Catholic reader who wanted sympathy combined with literary grace was driven to foreign fiction, such as that of Cardinal Wiseman. But with the first novels of Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti this was changed. At last the Catholic Church in Germany and Austria had produced a novelist who could rank with the best of the non-Catholic historical novelists, and could claim —if this singularly sweet and humble character could ever claim—to have influenced the general tendency of German historical fiction. The period of the Counter-Reformation and of Baroque art is receiving greater and more sympathetic attention now than it received a few years ago, and those who have shed certain prejudices might well consider the work of this most baroque of German living writers.

A Constantinople correspondent, writing to the *Manchester Guardian* of proposed changes in the Turkish educational system, says: "Another innovation made by the Ministry is that education is to be modelled in future on Anglo-Saxon and Germanic models. It has been decided that the Turkish character is better suited by this type of education than by the Latin type, which has been employed till now owing to the domination of French influence in the country. So the foreign auxiliary languages which are to be adopted are English and German. But at present no foreign language is to be taught in the official curriculum because the new Turkish tongue is still inadequately known, and it is considered essential to ground the young in this before allowing them to proceed to foreign language studies. On the other hand, English and German voluntary classes are to be encouraged vigorously."

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The New Books

The books listed by title only in the classified list below are noted here as received.

Biography

THE FIDDLER OF THE RITZ. By ARMAN VECSEY. Payson. 1931. $3.

These twenty short tales purport to be true stories of M. Vecsey's experiences and observations of the past two decades, during which he has conducted the orchestra at the New York Ritz-Carlton. In some of the episodes he played an active part, in others that of passive spectator, as the dramas, squalid, tragic, gay, of wealth and fashion, were unfolded to his ever alert perceptions by habitués of the famous hostlery. But in the majority of the stories—real characters, of course, appear under pseudonyms and the actuality of the incidents is not readily verifiable—the author, not unskilfully and to heighten his effects, seems to have legitimately utilized imagination, artifice, invention. None of these semi-fictitious tales, however, of improbable and not very interesting persons registers the high mark of the book but one which has the authentic tokens of genuine, unflavored reminiscence. It concerns an evening just prior to the author's installation at the Ritz, which he passed at the late lamented Little Hungary in company of the notorious Rigo, ex-husband of Clara Ward, where the flamboyant, fiddling adventurer was then leading that Bohemian resort's gypsy orchestra. That story, whether it be true or mere romancing, is three-star stuff, and for the reader with discernment it should seem a brilliant, even moving performance. The rest of the book, though never dull and always moderately entertaining, is suggestive of popular fiction magazine material.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY. By MICHEL CORDAY. Dutton. 1931.

The present rage for biography, popular interest in deeds of violence, and a somewhat bizarre family pride probably account for the appearance of this little book, a translation of one published in France two years ago.

The author describes himself as "a collateral descendant of Charlotte Corday." His pride in that relationship had earlier been attested by first taking Corday for a *nom de plume* and afterwards by legal assumption of the name.

Satisfaction of this sort is hard to understand. Charlotte Corday's only claim for attention is that she committed an uncommonly foolish murder. The man she killed is usually regarded as a monster of depravity. Perhaps he was, although there is much question as to the validity of that appraisal. But whatever Marat may have been, Charlotte Corday was an assassin. By her violence she injured the cause she sought to serve. Her foolish act can be explained, if at all, only upon the supposition that she labored under some form of hallucination.

It would seem clear that a biography of such a person, if one is needed, ought to be either strictly objective or a plea in extenuation. This, however, is an attempt at glorification.

The merit of the book lies in its delineation of the personality of Charlotte Corday. In this there is a good deal of gush and exaggeration. But the bias of the author is so obvious that probably most of his readers will make the proper discounts and get a clear and substantially correct idea of what Charlotte Corday was like.

By métier the author is a writer of fiction. In this book, however, he has tried to write as a biographer. Where he has ample materials at his command, as for the killing of Marat and the trial and execution of the assassin, he has succeeded tolerably well in following approved biographical methods. Where materials are scant, as for the early life of his heroine, he has frequently fallen back upon the methods of his craft. In general he has escaped the danger of falling into blunders about the French Revolution by isolating the episode in which Charlotte Corday figured.

Fiction

ROYAL HERITAGE. By ROLAND PERTWEE. Houghton Mifflin. 1931. $2.

This antiquarian age has gone back to the Eugénie hat, and Mr. Roland Pertwee, in the same spirit, has reproduced a more worthy period antique, the Zenda novel. Here is the merry and romantic principality (Mediterranean, not Balkan), the prince who abandons all for love and is exiled by a dictator to spend the rest of his days in drunken self-pity; and the prince's son, brought up as an English public-school boy of the old tradition, who goes back to his fatherland, foments a bloodless revolution, displaces the dictator and forgives him, and marries—have you guessed it?—the dictator's daughter.

Who, in 1931, would believe a tale like that? Obviously not Mr. Pertwee, who takes his story about as seriously as Noel Coward took "Private Lives," and in consequence manages to make it a much better piece of reading matter than you would expect. The dictator, a sort of Beaverbrook-Mussolini, gives the tale a dash of novelty, and the hero manages to take the curse off his romantic behavior by treating the whole affair more or less as a university rag. Not the best light novel of this or any other season, but a good deal better reading than most heavy novels.

HATHAWAY HOUSE. By NELIA GARDNER WHITE. Stokes. 1931. $2.

A first-class talent is necessary to make the commonplace appear significant. Without first-class talent the commonplace remains commonplace, or retrogresses towards tedium. The latter misfortune befalls this novel, wherein the author attempts to chronicle an ordinary family doing ordinary things. The attitude of the reader to this family is thoroughly "What of it?" whereas the attitude of Nelia Gardner White is "See how fine and interesting they are." We are asked to watch John Hathaway, his wife, and their two daughters over a period of seven or eight years, during which nothing of apparent moment seems to happen. True enough, the girls marry, the wife has a negligible affair, and the husband is for a couple of weeks without a job. But always—what of it? Everything is so lacking in drama, in color, in vitality, that the novel is almost the perfection of dulness. Yet the author evidently regards these Hathaways as rather delightful people; she embarrasses us by her pleasure in their timid virtues, their third-rate whimsy, their self-satisfied bookishness. And the novel itself, all the way through, is primly wholesome and faintly priggish.

Travel

ACROSS AFRICA ON FOOT. By RONALD A. MONSON. Dodd, Mead. 1931. $3.

Why anyone should want to walk from Cape to Cairo when reasonably comfortable trains, boats, and motor cars will take him to or near any place worth studying *en route* is more than we can see. But then, we never could understand flagpole-standing, marathon dancing, or six-day bicycle races. Monson's book gives one the impression of walking with a hell-bent purpose of getting there as quickly as possible and of regretting anything that he saw or heard on the way which in any manner checked his four to six mile an hour gait.

We always marvel that so many people start on long and arduous journeys with so little knowledge of hygiene and first aid. Monson and his companion avoided quinine in one of the most malarial parts of the world because a chance acquaintance told them that its continued use would interfere with their health. But malaria interfered more. They were very careful of what they ate and drank, but they were apparently willing to wash their teeth in anything wet. On one occasion, much to the horror of their host, they shaved in water he had brought them to drink; and only when they started to wash their teeth did they discover that he had offered them a sweetened beverage! Monson allowed a Sudanese doctor to operate on an infected toe with a blunt knife. Fortunately he suffered no serious results. But he could have avoided such risk by a few hours study in advance of his trip, and a small surgical kit would not have added greatly to the weight he carried. We ourselves in Africa carried a kit which weighed only four ounces. However, the Lord seems to provide a guardian angel to take care of some such people—and to bury the others.

One feels that the author sat down and wrote the book as soon as he reached his hotel in Cairo in the same mad haste that governed his walk. Consequently, local and trivial detail often predominates. Here and there are some really splendid descriptions; but on the whole the writing is more than commonplace. The use of commas is really astonishing. In the main the book lacks perspective. Nice comparisons of different poeples and broad generalizations which should result from such a trip are absent.

THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO. Edited by *Manuel Komroff*. Liveright. $5.

THE HARZ MOUNTAINS. By *Christopher Marlowe*. Dodd, Mead. $2.50.

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Points of View

Bathtubs and Mexico

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

The more than interesting review by Ernest Gruening of Stuart Chase's "Mexico," in your issue of August 8, has flashed a green signal to a train of thought. I regret not having the book itself at hand, in order to track down just what it was in Mr. Chase's attitude which prompted the reviewer to say at one point: "Mr. Chase confesses to a bathtub complex. . . . He believes that Northern hygiene could be introduced *in toto* into Mexican society without damage and with marked benefit."

I sympathize with Mr. Chase. If I visited Mexico I am sure that I should appreciate finding a land "where virtually no one was hungry or unemployed" and where contentment, happiness, and peace of mind would seem to be the rule rather than the rare exception. Also, I know I should miss the bathtubs.

But Mr. Chase must part with his penny, if he wants his cake. It is all very easy to suggest that Northern porcelain might be added, like icing, to this already most alluring cake of Mexican contentment and sane living, "without damage and with marked benefit." But *how,* Mr. Chase?"

I recall a summer community where Leading the Simple Life was the serious seasonal preoccupation of the founders. For several years the lake was everyone's bathtub, and there was real indignation when finally some apostate dared to hang his own Crane. Now, of course, twenty years later, bathrooms in the camps are almost universal, with the (still rather primitive) phenomenon which in England is known as "Company's water laid on." Coal stoves, for hot water, have followed, and even private electric lighting systems: "So much *simpler* than lamps, you know." But these people are only Middletowners on vacation, and such appurtenances of their camp life are but a natural expression of their whole philosophy.

When, however, one examines the problem of introducing modern plumbing into a Mexican village, does not Mr. Chase's thesis break down at once?

First, the bathtub itself: it must be manufactured, and in sufficient quantities to permit its sale at a price that can be paid. Consider the complicated processes required to produce such a simple and universal article. At once it presupposes, somewhere, "industrial civilization" and the "machine age."

Then, what is a bathtub without hot water and plenty of it? A central water supply and adequate boiler arrangements are almost foreordained. The Mexican village can furnish neither. Only organized industry can provide plumbing: supply pipes, drain pipes, boilers, and the requisite heating devices.

I do not say that a hot bath is impossible in rural Mexico. But "bathtubs" are, in the sense that I think that Mr. Chase, and most of us, employ that term.

No, regrettable as it may be, one cannot eat one's cake and have it.

ALFRED LOWRY.

Brussels, Belgium.

"Taghconic"

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
Sir:

As Herman Melville's hand is sometimes a difficult one to decipher, it is not strange that the possessor of the letter from him to Hawthorne concerning the "Guide Book to Berkshire" should have misread the passage.

The volume about which Mr. Morley inquired in "The Bowling Green," *The Saturday Review of Literature,* August 1, is the following:

"Taghconic; or Letters and Legends about Our Summer Home." By Godfrey Greylock. Boston: Redding & Company, 8 State Street. 1852. Godfrey Greylock was the pseudonym of Joseph Edward Adams Smith, the historian of Pittsfield (Massachusetts). Besides his "History of Pittsfield," he wrote "The Poet among the Hills," an account of Holmes's sojourn in the Berkshires (Pittsfield, 1895). "Taghconic" was reprinted in an enlarged and revised form in 1879. It is not without significance, perhaps, that Melville figures more prominently in the later than in the earlier edition.

In the first edition of "Taghconic," to which, of course, Melville referred in his letter, mention is made of him and of Hawthorne in these passages:

P. 13. The Old Elm at Pittsfield and Ahab's scar.

P. 16. Arrowhead, Melville's home.

Pp. 40-43. The balanced rock near Pontoosuc Lake, on Socrates Squire's farm, with "Memnon" carved on it, probably by Melville. This is the "Memnon Stone" of *Pierre,* bk. VIII. Melville seems to have inscribed the rock when he left the champagne bottle at its foot where Smith saw it.

Pp. 101-106. Description of Hawthorne and his home at Lenox.

P. 211. References to Melville and Hawthorne.

P. 213. Description of Dalton with its paper-mills; perhaps the setting for the American section of Melville's "Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids" (published in *Harper's,* April, 1855).

Other writers mentioned in "Taghconic" are Dr. Holmes, Miss Caroline M. Sedgwick, Bryant, and G. P. R. James, all of whom were, or had been, connected with the Berkshires.

The fact is not without interest, it may be, that the copy of Smith's book which is now before me, was presented to the Harvard College Library in 1854 by the author.

ROBERT S. FORSYTHE.

Cambridge, Mass.

Max Beerbohm

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review:*
SIR:

A reader of the *World-Telegram* was recently disturbed that he could find no discordant note in the more or less continuous pæan of praise sung in honor of Max Beerbohm.

Back in 1923 Max had one of his exhibitions of cartoons at the Leicester Galleries in London. That large portion of the British public which lacked a sense of humor—or rather lacked understanding of Max's wit—raised a great howl about the caricatures of the royal family, especially those of the Prince of Wales. Astonished, but gracious, Max withdrew the "offensive" pictures.

There was in London at that time an American author, who I am certain became aware of Max for the first time through the newspaper uproar. He proceeded to take part in it—at the tail end. Referring to the cartoon in which Dame Europa is shown bidding two pence—half penny for all the art Brother Jonathan had produced (see "Observations"), this distinguished patriot inquired of his lecture audience, "Where the devil does he get his ideas of America from? Why is he authorized to insult America in this way?" The gentleman was, of course, Mr. Sinclair Lewis.

The whole great chorus of protest was sufficiently discordant to satisfy those of Max's admirers who so nurse his delicate reputation as to be worried only by too extravagant praise. Mr. Lewis's faint squeak was not noticed.

Our *World-Telegram* correspondent has now, I find, called forth a still further echo. A writer in the New York *American* finds that Max's French is not what it should be and proceeds to give him a lesson. True, the lesson consists solely of an explanation to Max of the meaning of *petit-maître,* and Max is informed that it means not a dilettante, but "an eighteenth century man of the cloth who frequented the salons as the *cavalier servente* of some great lady."

It is too bad that the *American* is not read in Rapallo, for Max will miss this; but for the benefit of Mr. Rascoe we recommend a reference to *any* French-English dictionary. If he would make doubly sure, he may consult the Authors and Printers' Dictionary (Oxford) which on the cover states, incidentally, that it attempts to be among other things "A Guide for Correctors of the Press."

W. S. HALL.

New York City.

Round about Parnassus

(*Continued from page* 137)

life "Murdered and murderer, goes murdering down." It is:

—But He,
The Self,
The Watcher of the Race,

The One,
The Witness,
Knower of the Plot,

Who bears life
As a mask
Upon a face,
He goeth not!

I see that I have come to the end of my space without being able to discuss "The Flowering Stone" by George Dillon. As the testament of youth, it must wait till next week, at which time also I shall review "The Signature of Pain," by Alan Porter.

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The Reader's Guide

Conducted by MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the choice of books should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. As for reasons of space ninety percent of the inquiries received cannot be answered in print, a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed for reply by mail.

E. D., New York, asks for books on interior decorating of apartments published not earlier than 1929. "Form and Reform," by Paul Frankl (Harper), is for the present at least the last word in modernistic decoration; it includes buildings, furniture, textiles, and ornaments and illustrates its opinions with a hundred striking plates. So much of our present impetus originated at the Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925—which caused such dissatisfaction with existing shop-fronts that for several years after so many of them were made over, behind barricades, that the boulevards looked as if there had been a bombardment — that "Modern French Decoration," by Katharine Kahle (Putnam) has a special interest. And there is the symposium, in color, photographs and text, "Decorative Art: 1930," edited by Holme and Wainwright (Boni), a survey of present-day tendencies in house decoration, furniture, textiles, and metal work.

M. P. S., Lausanne, Switzerland, asks for information about the author of "The Heavenly Twins," whose pen name was Madame Sarah Grand. "Our own reference books tell us" she says, "only that she was Frances Elizabeth MacFall (née Clarke), born in 1862, an English novelist." It is amazing how this old novel refuses to lie down and die. Let a copy of it turn up on a bookstall—and copies of it continue to make battered appearances there—and some young person takes it home and asks how long this has been going on? It was, I notice, a "growing-up daughter" in Switzerland who asked for this information. But I, who read it when I was a growing-up daughter, can say only that MacFall was her name, that she was one of the most determined and uncompromising suffragists of her period, a friend of M. Betham Edwards (she wrote the preface for that lady's memorial volume), and that though she wrote "Ideala" and several other romances, she lives in nineteenth century literature as the author of one book. Annie Russell Marble's "Pen Names and Personalities" (Appleton)—this is the book about pseudonyms for which *K. L., Nantucket,* just asked me, by the way—says that "When Frances Elizabeth MacFall wrote 'The Heavenly Twins' she chose the name of Sarah Grand 'because it was simple, short, and emphatic—not easily forgotten,' " but not a word why Madame always went with it. Forrest Reid, writing in that admirable symposium, "The Eighteen Eighties" (Macmillan), on "Minor Fiction in the Eighties" says "it was 'The Story of an African Farm' which paved the way for the 'Yellow Asters,' 'David Grieves,' and 'Heavenly Twins' of the 'nineties," but of all the books on that decade those leaves I have fluttered in search of a reminiscence of Sarah Grand I am convinced I once read, not one that I now can find more than mentions her. Mr. Beer's "Mauve Decade" (Knopf) describes, in its chapter on Harry Thurston Peck, how the professor tried to talk of "The Heavenly Twins" to some Western suffragists and "they simply froze me alive. The woman's rights movement will never get along very far until women get down off the high horse and become rational in such matters." Here, one feels, may be the reason for the stillness about the book in contemporary records. You were not supposed to talk about it. And to this day it is remembered as a book about which a lady does not talk.

The same letter asks for other "old-fashioned novels" illustrating phases of social development, like this or "All Sorts and Conditions of Men;" novels too closely involved with the problems they discussed to survive their solution—or rather, their superannuation. Most of Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels are like this; all, indeed, save those based on "real life," like "Lady Rose's Daughter." Most of the novels of H. G. Wells will be. Mary Cholmondeley's "Red Pottage" was one of those single stories that make a whirling sensation and keep the author alive till all its readers are dead. "Trilby" keeps coming back in one form or another; I find that "Helen's Babies" still circulates in public libraries, and it was not so long ago that young ladies eating their luncheons in Trinity churchyard used to enliven the process with "Charlotte Temple," a romance. No one recommended or advertised it; it just trickled from hand to hand for a century. Speaking of books not advertised, Winwood Reade's "The Martyrdom of Man" is at last coming out into the open; I don't know how long it has been making its way like an underground river through the lives of readers. They have given it one to another; now Dutton not only provides it with a new dress, but advertises it; the preface tells its strange romantic story.

Continuing to speak of "old-fashioned" novels, *the correspondent in Minnesota who asked for letters from other admirers of the works of Charlotte M. Yonge* is getting some delightful mail: I have been forwarding it from all over the country, and every letter is full of affectionate gratitude to the author and friendly reminiscences of one novel or another of hers. This department is forever starting unexpected sidelines; a Charlotte M. Yonge Old Home Week seems to be the latest of these.

E. R., Cincinnati, O., is interested in the number of people in this department who seem to be "setting their school language study to work." "As I happen to be one of them, perhaps I might pass on the titles of books I have found particularly helpful for German. The Chicago University Press issues a 'Junior College Series' for French, German, and Spanish; the German section is particularly good, as the readings are from modern literature. For review, Hagboldt's 'Essentials of German Reviewed' is excellent; his 'Building the German Vocabulary' is also helpful and contains a vocabulary of the first thousand words to learn. This month a dictionary of 2000 words most often used is to be published, each word used in a sentence or two. It seems odd that it never occurs to one in school that he could actually get enjoyment from reading in a foreign language. It is such a delight to read in the original, and gives one such a feeling of superiority!" No, it's not so odd, when you remember that the earnest effort of prep-school youth is toward the development of a perfect defense-mechanism against education in any form. This is one reason for the popularity of the Reader's Guide with people who were exposed to an education in their youth.

M. G., New York, soon leaving for Italy, needs a simple guide to easy Italian, such as will head toward reading the newspapers. I suggested Marinoni and Passarelli's "Simple Italian Lessons" (Holt), which presents the essentials in forty lessons, and the same authors' composition book, "Andiamo in Italia" (Holt), because this directs language study toward a supposed trip to Italy.

HERE is that information about gourds, from an authority who knows more about them than JOB—F. W. Hodge of the Museum of the American Indian:—

I do not know how far your correspondent E. S. N. D., Chester, Nova Scotia, has traveled in his or her search on the subject of gourds and their uses, but it may be interesting to the inquirer to know of the very early and widespread use of these objects among the American Indian tribes. But first the botanical side of the matter should be studied. Information thereon will be given by the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S., Department of Agriculture, Washington, and by Dr. M. R. Gilmore, The Museum, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I believe that Dr. Gilmore has devoted considerable attention to the subject.

The Indians found many uses for gourds wherever this interesting plant grew. To mention a few, in our own Southwest they have been used from prehistoric times to the present as dippers and rattles. (I have found gourd dippers in graves at the old Zuñi pueblo of Hawikuh, New Mexico.) The first recorded historical reference to a gourd rattle in the United States was that carried by the negro Estevan, companion of Cabeza de Vaca and later the guide of Marcos de Niza to the "Seven Cities of Cibola." This rattle was the cause of Estevan's undoing and of his death at the hand of the Zuñis in 1539. In Peru and elsewhere earthenware vessels modeled after gourds are not uncommon, and in Peru also has been found at least one skull whose trepined aperture was covered by a part of a gourd.

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Cherries, Drop Down

By ELIZABETH J. COATSWORTH

CHERRIES, drop down, cherries, drop down,
Cherries, drop down,
Down to our laps.
If we were princesses, gay smiling princesses,
We'd wear them this evening as earrings perhaps.
And everyone seeing us, seeing us, seeing us,
So gay, so smiling, and so debonair,
Would tell us how beautifully
Our new jewelled earrings
Set off the dark wings of our thick Spanish hair.

Reviews

BUCKAROO. By FJERIL HESS. New York: Macmillan Co. 1931. $2.50.

Reviewed by WILL JAMES
Author of "Smoky"

TO me, deserts are long stretches of sand where there's not a bird nor a bush nor water for a hundred miles at a stretch. Most people call parts of Utah, Nevada, and Arizona desert, but when you can find clear springs at every forty miles and less, with ranches at them springs, sage and grama grass in between, scattered bunches of cattle and horses, cowboys and prospectors at home and happy there, that's not desert. It's sure barren looking to a stranger, but if the stranger would have the chance to stop and get acquainted with them barren looking scopes of country, he could go anywhere in the world afterwards and never forget that land. It's the land that God reserved for the cowboy and which will never be took away from him. There's many Western states where there's such reserves, and the plow will never tear them up.

There's been a good book wrote that's called "Buckaroo." It's been wrote by Fjeril Hess. It's supposed to be a book for girls, but I liked it and I'm thinking that any girl, even one that's flighty and high-time crazy, will sure more than stop and read that book twice if she ever gets a holt of it. Boys and men will like it, too.

"Buckaroo" is the story of a girl of the East that's been used to have somebody open the door for her and escort her to a limousine. She'd graduated from school and wanted to branch out to see what use she could be and hires out as a schoolma'am to go West. She'd heard of the "open spaces" and cowboys, and thought how romantic that would be to see and live all of that.

Well, as it goes, the ranch where she was to teach school disappointed her, so did the country. She cried and wished she was home all the first week, but that cleaned her out good and after that she begin to take interest in things, she begin to smiling, doing things, and the first things she knowed she got a new sight for the country around, got to admiring things and even helped built the house she was going to teach in. The family she was with was natural and good to her, and finally, with the good buckaroos that was around she went as high in her interest as to wanting to be one herself.

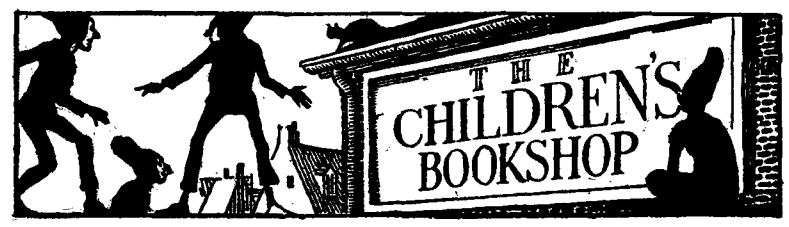
Her teaching the kids at the ranch is good, and she found plenty of time to ride on the side and have many experiences. The girl is game, and she gets to fit in as one of the family. She asks a lot of questions that any greenhorn would ask, and the way they're answered is to me the best part of the book. Because there's information there that many a greenhorn would ask, and they's answered true. I know because I've rode in many such countries as the author tells of. Most likely she knows the Kawich range, the White Mountains close to Death Valley, Rhyolite, and all them places. Well, I rode for outfits from that country plum down through hers and away into Mexico. So I ought to know if she knows what she's talking about, and I'll say she does.

The details in the story are a world of information. I liked Lynn, the main character in the story. Ted and Dannie and Jasper are such cowboys as you'll find on open ranges, they're not the kind that you read of in wild west stories, they're real.

True to Lynn, the girl in the story, there come a time when she felt like she was part of the country, and the owner of the family, so, when summer come and her school term was over, it come before she knowed it, and she cried some more. She even kissed her saddle before she left.

She didn't fall in love with any of the cowboys nor any of the mining engineers while she was at the ranch, she had a lot of traveling to do yet, see the world, study music and so on, but I'll bet my best boots if she's the girl I think she is, after she seen all she wants to, she'll realize that she fell in love with all the cowboys there, the engineers, and the whole country which she rode over while teaching school at Pinon.

The book is well illustrated with mighty fine drawings by Lee Townsend.



Conducted by MARION PONSONBY

AMERICAN SONGS FOR CHILDREN. Selected by WINTHROP PALMER. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1931. $2.50.

Soft, various, and sublime.
Exempt from wrongs of Time.

THESE words of Coleridge are not an unfitting description of Mrs. Palmer's "American Songs for Children." Her book reminds one of the magic pitcher of Baucis and Philemon, whose fountain of sweet, invigorating milk never ran dry.

The songs spring from the very roots of life. Deep and varied experiences have given them birth, long years have proved their enduring charm, and now they are a priceless heritage of which no child should be cheated.

Who would not have a garden full of flowers, and see color and beauty from every window of his home? This is, unfortunately, not possible at all. But the color and beauty of these wonderful old songs belong to everyone, and every color of the rainbow is in them.

There are the gay pinks and blues of songs like "Peanuts," "The Wedding of Mr. Duck," and "The Shoemaker,"—the lively green of "Yankee Doodle" or "Froggie Went a-Courting,"—the magic opalescence of the Negro spirituals, the "Creole Lullaby" and "Omaha Love Song"—and the splendid gold and crimson of "The Battle Song" and "California," etc., etc.

A book like this is very heartening, and a most welcome oasis of melody in an increasingly noisy and mechanical world.

The majority of the accompaniments are obviously arranged for a child or an amateur, but, towards the end of the book, a few suddenly burst out into fairly ambitious choral effects, presenting difficulties that a child's fingers could not compass, and over which the untrained hand of an amateur would fumble.

TALES OF THE PERSIAN GENII. Retold by FRANCES JENKINS OLCOTT. With illustrations by WILL POGANY. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1931. $3.

Reviewed by MARY F. LABAREE

THE Orient may or may not have needed, may or may not need, our superimposed and infiltrated Occidental contraptions and ways of doing, but without *if* or *perhaps*, for freeing the imagination and for lamps ashine down ways of thinking, the Occident is deeply and irrevocably in debt to and in need of the Orient.

Scholars of many lands have delighted to offer translations from the tongues of Western Asia. We are duly grateful that English-writing scholars have done their share of this translating work, and so made available not only profound religions, treatises, histories and poems of many brands, but treasure trove of the One Thousand and One Nights and many another collection of tales.

In this tested collection from different sources, Frances Jenkins Olcott has relied on translations, some of which were known in England as early as 1765 and been loved by such diverse individuals as Gladstone, David Copperfield, and Archbishop Whately. (Though perhaps the Archbishop only approved and missed out on the loving.) Three of the aforementioned translations bear most pleasing labels: "The Delightful Lessons of Horam, Son of Asmar," "The Delight of Hearts," "The Bagh O Bahar."

The tales in this volume are told by benevolent Persian Genii to Patna and Coulor, children of Imam Guilar of Terki in the province of Mazanderan which as everyone should know, lies in the northern confines of Persia, bordering upon the Caspian Sea.

Two ravishing youngsters were Patna and Coulor, son and daughter of the Imam, and to the perfection of the outer boy and girl, their proud and over-anxious father wished to add perfection of mind and character. In order to learn "true wisdom" and "find peace and happiness," he thought to send them, for meditation, into desert places; but a gracious and sensible fairy saved them for the destiny of serving their fellow men by herself undertaking their education in a fashion both amazing and abrupt. So it comes about that neither like ordinary boy and girl in Mazanderan nor like pelicans in the wilderness, but in the abode of "Good Genii who obeyed the will of Solomon, the son of David, on both of whom be peace," they learned unforgettable lessons—not from tedious lesson books but from the lips of the Good Genii, who had gone up and down the world, far and wide and long, until they knew the hearts and ways of world-folk, as no mere mortal might in one little life, attain the knowing.

I myself would sit more than one night through, at the feet of such tellers of tales, learning "true wisdom," and with joy in the learning. Neither printed page nor cinema can fully take the place of that ancient and honorable line of tellers of tales, men and women of gorgeous imaginations and bosoms, whose sole business was to serve as storehouses of the lore of their people.

With the charming Patna and Coulor, follow their Fairy into the fountain, and you will not over-soon return to Mazanderan or Maine or California.

THE WHITE LEOPARD. By INGLIS FLETCHER. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1931. $2.50.

SON OF THE WHITE MAN. By HERBERT BEST. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. $2.

Reviewed by G. GORDON TRENERY

BOTH these books are more than ordinarily interesting and well-informed accounts of the life of an average white man isolated among the primitive tribes of Africa. The white man succeeds mainly because he must—it is the old story of the survival of the fittest—for in darkest Africa the weak go under swiftly and inevitably.

In the "White Leopard" Inglis Fletcher has been very successful in showing this. With his hero, Stephen Murdoch, we plunge into an atmosphere of steaming tropic heat, and before there is time to get more than the haziest idea of our bearings, we are called upon to give judgments that would have baffled Solomon, to track down lions, witch doctors, slave dealers, rogue elephants, and journey through forests and swamps for days and weeks on end.

Fever-wracked, worn to lean shadows, aching in every limb, our reason tottering on its throne, we still have initiative and courage and a remnant of strength left to carry us to the secret, inviolable stronghold of the Black Emperor — that super-fiend who has long terrorized the district. Unarmed we face the enemy, and, by the power of the human eye quell him once and for all!

Wonderful! Yes, but our self-esteem is considerably deflated when we close the book—escaping at last from the spell that Stephen Murdoch has cast—and realize that without him we should never have achieved such triumphs. And, being human, we try to square the thing by detracting a little from Murdoch's glory.

Would he, for instance, have translated that message the native drums were sending, when even Kalaiti failed to do so? Could one unarmed man face a human tiger like N'yamgundu and subdue him merely by superiority of character?

And the eclipse—that was altogether too opportune, and so old and threadbare a device! Surely the moon has served her turn in making magic for the white man! Fickleness has always been attributed to the moon-goddess, and, yet, could any deity have worked more faithfully for so many years in eclipsing herself at the necessary psychological moment for the valiant hero at the mercy of savage tribes?

"Son of a Whiteman" is a much slighter tale, for the interest centres round a boy, which limits the field of operation to a cetain extent. But the author, Herbert Best, does not recognize too many limitations, and the boy has the wildest adventures and escapes.

The fault that shows its smug head occasionally in the "White Leopard" is more pronounced here. Jerry is miraculously infallible. His masterly grasp of native psychology, his philosophy and mature judgment when confronted with dangerous complicated problems, are hardly those of a boy!

But it is a good story. The flavor of Africa is authentic, the incidents characteristic and arresting. The Elders of the Zanta tribe, with their secret grove and sacred crocodile, are pleasantly gruesome, although it is doubtful if their High Priest would have been quite so ingenuously confiding.

Morgan, the old foreman, is one of the best drawn characters in the book, and the shrewd way in which this old timer outwits his lazy superstitious workmen is most amusing and convincing.

DIGGING IN YUCATAN. By ANN AXTELL MORRIS. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1931. $3.50.

Reviewed by HERBERT J. SPINDEN
Brooklyn Museum

IN this book which Ann Axtell Morris has written for young folks describing her experiences over several years among the ruins of Chichen Itza one finds more real stuff than in most recent books on Central America written for adults. You feel that her contact with facts is close and genuine, that her enthusiasms are authentic, and that, best of all, she grasps a true adventure.

Archeology is exploration of the past, a quest for the hopes and fears which have inspired man's rise from a savagery to civilization. The true archeologist confronts a stone image in jungle depths and says: "Tell me why your people made you!" Now it takes a really magic gift to make stones speak and it takes another magic gift to make the hurrying world listen. Perhaps the best reason for seeking to recover fossil emotions is that we need them to make our own illusions of grandeur complete. If some philosopher of a future age should wish to compose a fitting epitaph on our present splendid age he well might write: "They wanted to know it all."

Chichen Itza in northern Yucatan has a longer recorded history than any other city in the New World and while the painting, sculpture, and architecture found here do not always reach peaks of excellence for the great Maya nation nevertheless many things brought to light in the exploration of this site by the Carnegie Institution of Washington are of outstanding interest. Daily we are becoming more conscious of the fact that American Indians bequeathed to the modern world a great heritage. "I used to hear so much about Columbus discovering America," says Mrs. Morris,

"that I began to believe Columbus *invented* America. Not until recently did I realize that America was a flourishing institution for centuries before Columbus was ever born, that millions of Americans had lived and died surrounded by civilized wealth and luxury before Europe accidentally stumbled upon the other, very live, half of the world."

By condensing five or six years of field work on a large project into the compass of one book Mrs. Morris obtains a richer mixture of incidents and discoveries than is usual in a scientific narrative. There are interesting patches of local color—lights on Indian character and the lore of plants and animals. The plain tale of how jobs are begun is enlivened by drama, the setting up of serpent columns, the piecing together of many stones each with a bit of fresco, painting, the showing up and excavation of a buried temple, the devastation of rare and most severe hail stones that stripped the trees.

Mrs. Morris tells her story with humor and lively comment and generally in a way that should appeal to young readers. Occasionally one meets a bit of artificial romancing as when she repeats the unproven tale of virgins thrown into the deep pool of sacrifice at Chichen Itza and the quantities of gold taken out. Most of the skulls of victims are those of men and boys, and far from being a king's ransom the few pounds of yellow metal dredged from the Sacred Cenote would not ransom a missionary. One looks in vain for the explanation that human sacrifice at Chichen Itza was brought in by the Toltec Mexicans and is not a normal ceremony of Yucatan.

The illustrations by Jean Charlot add sprightly caricatural touches, but the photographs are not as brilliant as might be expected from the material available.

The great Harry Houdini's real name was Erich Weiss. He was born of German-American parents in Wisconsin in 1874 and died five years ago. Mr. W. B. Gilson, with the aid of Houdini's widow, has now edited a volume of Houdini's personal memoranda of his escapes, to be published in England by Philip Allan.

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Fifty British Books of the Year

By Margaret B. Evans

At the New York Public Library fifty British books selected by a committee composed of members of the First Edition Club of London have recently been on exhibition (August 10-31). This collection of books published during 1930 parallels the American Fifty Books of the Year selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts, which were again shown at a return exhibition in the library for purposes of comparison with the product of the British presses.

Both exhibitions reintroduce the question of functionalism in book making. It seems artistically naïve for the designer of fine books to work in the monumental style whenever he lays out a de luxe volume. There is no good reason for a limited edition or fine library book not being a joy to the hands as well as to the eyes. Limited edition books are in danger of becoming trophies—mere objects of display. Purpose and use are absent from a typographer's mind when a book of poems assumes the proportions suitable for an altar book. Among the British books, D. H. Lawrence's "Birds, Beasts, and Flowers," printed by the Cresset Press, and Pindar's Odes, from the Shakespeare Head Press, are examples of the monumental style of de luxe printing in which the readability of the book is lost in sumptuous format.

But more than atoning for any lack of suitability to use in some of the British books are the charm and beauty of a high proportion of the volumes—a higher proportion to the whole than in the American exhibition. "John Bell, 1745-1831," designed by Stanley Morison and printed by the Cambridge University Press, has a title-page of great clarity of style, with the beauty which is inherent in precise emphasis and nuance in type arrangement. "The Poems of Christina Rossetti," chosen by Walter de la Mare and printed at the Gregynog Press, is delicately allusive to the nineteenth century, yet crisp and modern in feeling.

Among the fifty books are five printed at the Oxford University Press of especially varied interest. For this press Bruce Rogers designed a new edition of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," a thoroughly readable little book printed on gray paper. The title-page shows skill in the arrangement of type ornaments so that the page is in some subtle way reminiscent of the subject, and in no way mere *tour de force*. Printers and collectors who know his "Chanson de Roland" of Riverside Press days may compare his versatile treatment of marginal notes. In the "Aoland" they are set in that Gothic-appearing type, Civilite. Here italic is used, exquisitely printed in a pale gold ink—a valuable lesson for the typographer in historical knowledge and its subtle application lightly carried.

For the Nonesuch Press, "The Courtier's Library" of John Donne was set in Fell type at Oxford. This is a little book, and a very beautiful one. Though entirely individual, it is comparable in size and general appearance to the "Memoires" of John Evelyn printed at Oxford for the Nonesuch Press in 1926. This page, it will be remembered by readers of *The Colophon*, is among Francis Meynell's favorites in his work for that press.

Another Oxford book, "The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins," though perhaps a trifle closely leaded, is thoroughly pleasant, with italic running heads giving rhythm and interest to every page.

Two of the Oxford books fall within the price range of the ordinary trade edition and are excellent models of what an inexpensive book may be. "XXth Century Sculptors," by Stanley Casson, and "The Testament of Beauty," by Robert Bridges, are exceedingly fine work, with great clarity of arrangement.

The matter of the trade edition has been intelligently handled by the selection committee of the First Edition Club. A maximum of 50 marks, divided in proportion among such considerations as paper, design, binding, relation to price, general impression, was allotted each book and so scaled that an inexpensive book could gain in marks from its relation to price or general impression over obvious limitations in paper and binding, which resulted in the inclusion of several delightful books that go far ahead of the comparable work in the American list. Of these, Aldous Huxley's "Vulgarity in Literature" and Richard Aldington's translation of Alcestis, both printed by T. and A. Constable, Ltd., and issued by Chatto & Windus, and the De la Mare publication of "The Library" by George Crabbe, are amazingly lovely.

A sumptuous reprinting of "Gulliver's Travels" by the Oxford University Press with illustrations by Rex Whistler tops the British list as the book magnificent. Although it is a large and cumbersome two-volume affair, excuse may be made for its near-opulence because of the beautiful plates and fine color work. It is a perfectly executed book which does not fall short of its pretensions.

Of the reconsidered American list, the "Treasure Island" (Anderson Books), the Apellicon Press "All about Mother Goose" (Updike), Covici-Friede's "Love and the Luxembourg," designed by Frederick Warde, The Limited Editions Club "La Fontaine" (Updike), and Elmer Adler's original and spirited arrangement of "When We Were Very Young," all stood out as contributing genuinely to the art of interesting fine printing.

It is somewhat significant that eighteen of the American books and eight of the British list were hand-set. Only one British book was composed on the Linotype machine—the Monotype seems to dominate English fine printing—while almost half of the fifty American books were Linotype-set. Room enough here for several printing arguments!

If it has been the fault of the private press gang, as Stanley Morison has termed the limited edition printers on both sides of the Atlantic, to take themselves too seriously, at least these 100 books show an even quality of technical execution and the presence of critical standards which remove any hint of the secluded toy press and ineffectual dilettantism.

An interesting collection of coins, including rare early United States pieces, from the large copper half cents to $5 and $10 gold coins, was recently sold by Thomas L. Elder of New York. One curious piece was a Clark, Gruber & Co.'s pattern Pike's Peak $20 piece in gilded copper. It was struck in Denver in 1861. Another early piece was a California octagonal gold dollar of 1854. Gold dollars, which are becoming more and more rare, were well represented dating from 1849 to 1862. The collection also contained a large variety of Civil War currency, much Confederate paper money, and old bank-notes. There was also a Washington medal struck in 1797. Another rarity was a Lincoln assassination medal.

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FABRICIUS is a wanderer, an adventurer, a natural teller of tales. In *The Love of Mario Ferraro* he carries his readers from the Blue Grotto in the sirenland of Capri, to the wharves of Naples, to a liner bound for South America, to the jungles of Paraguay. Exotic sights and sounds and smells emanate from every page. Romance hovers over every chapter. Believe it or not, there is even a broken heart!

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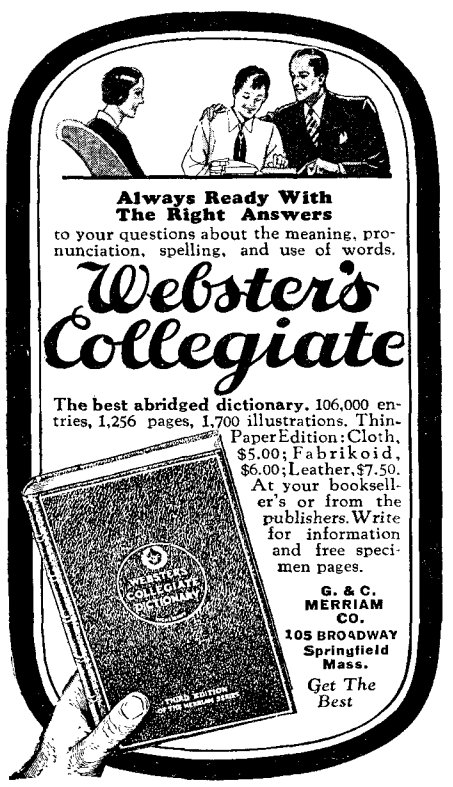
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The PHŒNIX NEST

OUT on the Coast some of the promising younger writers have started a new magazine, *The Fortnightly,* published every other Wednesday. It takes as its motto the words of *Voltaire,* "I do not believe a word that you say, but I will defend unto death your right to say it." *The Fortnightly* will review the arts and poetry and also publish articles and essays "of all tempers and attitudes, on any conceivable subject, as long as they represent original points of view, well said." There will be special reviewing departments on Music, the Dance, the Graphic Arts, Drama, Poetry, Books, and Architecture and Ceramics. Some of the people with established reputations who have promised contributions are *Sara Bard Field, Robinson Jeffers, Orrick Johns, Redfern Mason, Lincoln Steffens, Robert Penn Warren, Yvor Winters,* and *Charles Erskine Scott Wood.* The address of *The Fortnightly* is 426 Chestnut Street, San Francisco, California. Its subscription rate is three dollars a year, five dollars for two years. . . .

Maud Diver is holidaying in Scotland as the guest of *Mrs. Fleming, Rudyard Kipling's* sister, whom she has known intimately since her early days in India. Mrs. Diver's new novel, "Ships of Youth," has been a popular summer title on the Houghton Mifflin list. . . .

Ian Hay recently moved quarters in London and is now in a charming old house in Berkeley Square. There is an uncovered terrace leading from his study on the second floor which flower-boxes, awnings, etc., have made into an out-of-door dining-room. . . .

Four days ago *Hamlin Garland* celebrated his seventy-first birthday with the publication of his new book, "Companions on the Trail," in which he carries on the reminiscences begun in "Roadside Meetings."...

Helen E. Hokinson's "So You're Going to Buy a Book," that Minton, Balch has brought out, is full of the drawings of one of the most delightful of *New Yorker* artists. *Soglow's* "Pretty Pictures" from Farrar & Rinehart is another example of this type of book. Another *New Yorker draughtsman in collected form.* Both books are great stuff. We don't really know which we like better. You can put them up on the shelf with your *Peter Arnos* though no one else can, of course, touch the New Master. One of the best of Miss Hokinson's drawings, at least to us, is the picture of the pretty modern daughter eyeing her weeping mother at the play. Her stern remark is, "Why, mama! How can you fall for such hokum?" Although the stout lady who asks for "a wisp of veil . . . just for witchery," is pretty glorious too! . . .

The highest salaried sports writer of his time is *Damon Runyon,* the newspaperman whose new book of gangster stories, "Guys and Dolls," has been brought out by Stokes. . . .

Those who like good detective stories are familiar enough with Lord Peter Wimsey, the original creation of *Dorothy L. Sayers,* and will be glad to learn that Brewer, Warren and Putnam have published a new work of this author's featuring Lord Peter and called "Suspicious Characters."...

In "The Early Years of *Thomas Hardy*" (Macmillan), his widow tells us that the great novelist as a baby was thrown aside as dead when the nurse cried to the surgeon who presided at Thomas's birth, "Dead! Stop a minute: He's alive enough, sure!" Gosh, what a narrow escape for Tess! Also, as a baby, it is reported that a snake crept into his crib and slept on the breast of the sleeping babe! . . .

Norman Lindsay, who wrote a novel that rather impressed us, "Every Mother's Son," though an Australian artist, has just taken a six months lease on an apartment in New York. He is finishing a new novel and planning an exhibition of his pictures. . . .

Arthur H. Samuels has been appointed editor of *Harper's Bazar* by *John Randolph Hearst,* President of Harper's Bazaar, Inc. He succeeds *Charles Hanson Towne.* Mr. Samuels was formerly associate editor of *The New Yorker,* and more recently, editor of *Home and Field.* . . .

Frederick A. Gauthier, late of Blue Hills Avenue, Hartford, Conn., died the other day. For several years he was employed in the Allyn House barber shop. *Mark Twain* made a contract with *Wiliam T. Bassett,* the owner of the shop, for 365 shaves a year at $1 a shave and the contract provided that a barber must appear at the home of Mark Twain every morning at nine o'clock. Mr. Gauthier was usually assigned to the work. Mark Twain never allowed his hair to be trimmed, nor his long mustache, of which he used to bite off the long hairs! . . .

The first comprehensive autobiography of *Arthur Rimbaud,* written by *Jean Marie Carre,* is to be published by the Macaulay Company this fall, in a translation by *Hannah* and *Matthew Josephson.* The title is "A Season in Hell," and is taken from Rimbaud's biographical prose poem of that name. . . .

B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., of 50 Broad Street, Oxford, England, announces a new play by *Bernard Shaw,* called "Too True to be Good," which the author describes as a comedy and something of a sermon with a few music-hall tricks thrown in to make people laugh and also a dash or two of *Edgar Wallace!* . . .

Grace Hegger Lewis, author of "Half a Loaf," which Horace Liveright is bringing out in book-form after its successful serialization, has just returned from Brittany with her son, *Wells Lewis.* . . .

George Saintsbury, critic and scholar, and now eighty-six and over, has become president of what is said to be London's most exclusive club. It is called the Saintsbury Club. Its objects are "to honor the name and work of George Saintsbury by bringing together men whose love of wine is catholic and articulate; to publish occasional volumes bearing upon the allied subjects of wine and literature; to build up a cellar of interesting wine for the delectation and instruction of the members, to afford the members facilities for visiting famous vineyards under privileged conditions."...

The Southwest is to have its own book club, known as the West South Book Club. It will issue at least two books a year dealing with important phases of the history and development of Texas and the surrounding states. The editors of the Southwest Press at Dallas already have on hand a number of manuscripts important enough. The initial volume in preparation is to be *Mary Austin Holley's* "Letters of an Early American Traveller" and will include the first book ever written in English on Texas. . . .

We've had more letters about *Eden Phillpotts,* but one we regret not printing ere this was sent to us when we were away in the west. We print it now as it is written by *Mitchell Kennerley,* the distinguished publisher:

> I have been much interested in your remarks about Eden Phillpotts. As far back as 1894 Phillpotts was regarded as a coming man. It is curious how every few years he has been so regarded—and is still so regarded! Three years ago a Limited Collected Edition was published with an introduction by Arnold Bennett—but it did not sell.
>
> In 1902 I published in *The Reader* magazine an interview with him by William Wallace Whitelock and a review of "The Secret Woman," praising it very highly. The enclosed pages from Mudie's catalogue will interest you. He is also the author of "The Farmer's Wife" which was so tremendously successful.

Somebody signed *esh,* kindly writes us:

> I am glad you like *E. M. Delafield.* I don't think she has ever been sufficiently appreciated. One mentions her name, and one's companion smiles and says, "Oh yes, she writes such nice stories. So light, you know, and rather clever." The truth is, that Delafield is one of the most subtle novelists we have at the present time. Her knowledge of human nature is uncanny. She wrote a book, "Turn Back the Leaves," a little while ago. It went pretty well abroad, I understand, but not very well over here. This is a pity, for the novel deserved to be widely read and discussed.

We agree heartily with "esh" about the subtlety of E. M. D. As for "light" stories, she has written some that are enough to twist your soul into bow-knots if you've got any sensitivity at all!

Very sincerely yours,

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